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WOODCOCK SHOOTING

Woodcock and Young

WOODCOCK SHOOTING

BY

EDMUND W. DAVIS

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TO MY SON

WITH PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS OF THE DAYS
WE HAVE PASSED TOGETHER

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WOODCOCK SHOOTING

WOODCOCK SHOOTING

THE BIRDS

I ONCE asked a salmon angler to tell me his feelings when he realized that he was on his way to Canada to fish a famous river in the great wilderness of the North. He turned and looked at me; the sweetest smile appeared on his usually sad face, and his soul seemed to reflect the purest thoughts. Life in the forest brought him into closer communion with Nature, and inspired all that is noble in the man. If an angler is incapable of appreciating the beauty of his surroundings, and goes forth only for the sake of destruction, he knows not the pleasure of the art. Such depth of feeling I always experience in salmon fishing, and it is quite as great when I start on my annual trip to New Brunswick to seek the sport with that game little bird, the woodcock. For does he not denote all that is beau-

tiful?—the coming of spring, when all the world is bright and gay, and all the woods are green; when hill and dale are vying with each other to summon forth the breezes and the blossoming buds which are to dispel the cold winds of the North.

The small birds rejoice in the green leaves' returning;
The murmuring streamlet winds clear thro' the vale;
The hawthorn trees blow in the dews of the morning,
And wild, scattered cowslips bedeck the green dale.

And does not the woodcock's arrival tell us that the silent brooks held in winter's embrace during the long frozen months are now free, and like the Hotun-nor are already dancing merrily through the woods on their way to the sweet-scented meadows where rippling with laughter they behold again the bright sunshine of spring? His coming is welcomed by the disciples of Walton also; for now they know that the alders along the banks of these struggling waters, slowly calmed by the dazzling sun, will soon array themselves in their summer gowns of green, giving protection and shade to the coveted prizes lurking in the secluded pools.

But should you lure
From his dark haunt, beneath the tangled roots
Of pendant trees, the monarch of the brook,
Behooves you then to play your finest art.

So does the coming of the woodcock bring joy to the lovers of forest and cover and stream.

How few people there are who, when driving about the country at twilight in the early spring, know the meaning of the sweet sound which greets them from the sky! A peculiar note, most dear to the sportsman; it is the love-song of the cock as he rises on high to sing to his cherished mate, who sits below content, and listens to the ardent pleadings of her lord. Suddenly his lordship swoops downward to bestow a caress upon her, and rising quickly, poises himself in the air to continue his sweet melodies.

As darkness covers the land he becomes weary, and ceasing his protestations of love, drops from his aerial perch to nestle near his comfortable home by the alders. There he relates to the expectant mother the hardships of his journey South. One morning, 'way down in North Carolina, feeling weary, he had delayed too long for breakfast. As he was quietly dozing on a hillside, he suddenly awakened and saw standing over him, perfectly rigid, a large black and white setter, with distended nostrils and wild eyes bursting forth from their sockets. What it was he knew not, but springing from the ground and darting quickly through the branches, he had nearly topped the trees when there was a loud report, and a stinging

pain. Down he fell, striking against a bough, and dangling there for a moment, finally struck upon the dry brush on the ground. No sooner had he collected himself, when, lo! the black and white monster appeared again, running here and there in a state of frenzy; now with head up, sniffing the air; a wild charge across the path; then back again to gaze at last on the bird lying helpless on the brush pile. A tremendous bound, and he was almost seized. Making a mighty effort, he rose slowly into the breeze, and darting upward, sailed away farther South, fortunate in escaping such a terrible country.

Such are the tales he tells to his companion, as she listens excitedly at his side. What pleasure to be back again by the swift-running brook and find he is not forgotten!

The birds pair during the early spring. The days go by, adventurous and joyous, with singing and merrymaking, until one fine morning his lordship awakens and four mites stand waiting with upturned heads. The hen usually lays four eggs, buff-colored and pear-shaped, with light brown spots. Her nest is a small bunch of dry leaves which she has scraped together. Although not a pretentious affair, it seems to be all that she finds necessary. Incubation lasts about three weeks.

The four little bunches of feathers, moist from

Where He Is Not Forgotten

the shell, are soon quite dry. The youngsters readily adapt themselves to their surroundings, and are able to toddle about and take care of themselves. About this time the lord and master becomes a bit indifferent to the welfare of his family, and instead of remaining at home, relating his deeds of adventure, as once pleased him, you will find him off alone, moody and thoughtful, resting on some knoll away from his brood. No more dancing and listening now to the serenade in the moonlight. Care and responsibility have taken their place. The mother must be continually on the alert lest some harm befall the little family. First they must be taught to find their food by turning over the leaves and seizing the small insects lying beneath, and also by sticking their bills into the cool, moist earth, and pulling forth their cherished morsel, the angleworm.

By summer-time they are well versed in the art of woodcraft. They like to feed along the brooks under the alders, or in some newly ploughed cornfield; and you will find indications of their presence in their numerous borings. It is in these places that the sportsman during the summer usually seeks his game.

Then the young birds must be told how to be expert in detecting danger; and when alarmed crouch motionless upon the ground, trusting in the

similarity of color to escape observation until borne to a place of safety, where the mother often carries them. When she is pursued, they watch with admiration the craftiness of their parent. Fluttering about as though wounded, she gradually leads the sportsman a merry dance until he is a safe distance away; then, as she is about to be seized, she springs into the air, and twisting among the trees, disappears in the distance, leaving him in astonished silence. Returning by a circuitous route, she carries her dears to some secluded spot, and happiness reigns again for a time in the family.

Woodcock usually make their nests at some distance from the feeding-grounds. At twilight they take their brood to these cool and hidden retreats; here the young birds observe the labor of their parents and are taught to procure for themselves a dainty morsel. Many wriggling worms are laid before their astonished eyes as they toddle about in the moonlight. Thus they pass the night until early dawn, when the mother conveys them back to the nest in the woods; and there, during the daytime, the youngsters can often be seen dozing amid the leaves.

An English sportsman relates that "he once came upon a female woodcock watering her three young ones at a rivulet. She picked up one in each

claw and flew off with them. He concealed himself in a thicket and waited to see if the mother would come back. Presently she returned, and picked up the remaining bird also."

The mother will carry her young not only to and from the feeding ground, but will often bear them away from danger. I have never been fortunate enough to see the hen in this labor of affection. I have seen her flop about on the ground as though wounded, and try to lure me away from the young birds, as ruffed grouse will often do. Whether she carries them between her feet or upon her back I am unable to say. There is some discussion among sportsmen concerning her method, but I think that the feet are the most natural means of conveyance.

In summer when a cock is disturbed in his meditations, he flushes with a start, and circling, is almost sure to wend his way to his mate, seeking protection at her feet. He is not always welcome at this time, for anticipating danger and fearing pursuit, and not wishing to leave the helpless young to take care of themselves, the mother often hesitates too long, and in her attempted flight falls, pierced by the cruel shot.

O ye, who never taste the joys
Of friendship, satisfied with noise,

Fandango, ball and rout,
Blush, when I tell you how a bird
A prison with a friend preferred
To liberty without!

Lifting her tenderly, one gazes into her large, troubled eyes, which seem to say: "What possible pleasure can it give you to kill me? Do you think that because I am only a bird, life is not dear? Will not the little family miss me? What will become of them? Every morning they come to me for a trip to the brook, and in the heat of the day we rest beneath the alders, telling tales of the future. Then in the shades of the evening we fly about the swamps, dancing and playing in the bright moonlight. Across the meadows, now topping the trees, up and down the swale we go, happy because the woods are our home and we love the silence of the night. Instead of killing us, would it not be better to cultivate our acquaintance; to learn something about our life? We could give you merry times and teach you much, and in the end you would derive more pleasure and feel happier because you had helped to save the woodcock. Do you not know that if we are pursued so relentlessly in summer, soon there will be no more love-songs; the alders along the bank will become desolate; the old apple tree at the foot of the orchard will be deserted, and the whistling of

A Woodcock's Home

the birds as they drop in at twilight to feed among the cattle lying in the pasture will be no more? The whole country would feel sad at the passing of the woodcock. But if you will promise not to disturb my fledglings in the summer, when they are weak and can hardly fly, and wait until the cold, crisp mornings of autumn, then they will accept the battle for life."

I used to think shooting sharptail grouse in Northern Montana the height of all sport, and various kind of wild fowl in Southern California gave me great pleasure. One winter I pursued the fascinating jack-snipe in the Bayou-Teche County, Louisiana, and it was there, I am told, that Mr. J. J. Pringle, many years ago, made the remarkable score of three hundred and sixty-six snipe in one day. I can readily believe the report; for in that country, on less favorable ground, I bagged before sunset one hundred and ten of these birds. Middle Florida used to be a grand place for feathers, and three winters I shot that country as far as Mosquito Inlet. The climate, however, was not favorable, so I wandered to the border of Northern Kansas, and for seven years during the months of November and December I roved in this land of sunshine. One of my pleasantest recollections are those bright, cool days, with Bob White on the Western Prairie.

Big game shooting has had its attraction, and the autumn and winter months have often found me following this interesting sport. I remember stalking a crafty old moose one December day through a forest in Nova Scotia. It had led us a long chase, about nine miles from the cabin, and the sun had nearly gone down before I obtained the spreading antlers. We were obliged to return over a rough bit of ground. As six inches of snow had fallen during the day, the walking was most difficult; so it was quite ten o'clock before we saw the lights of home sparkling through the dark, snow-laden firs. How welcome they were! The sound of our tread had been anxiously awaited, for presently a door opened and the glare of burning logs penetrated the gloom and guided us to a hidden path up the knoll. Brushing the snow from our jackets, we entered the log house, and were soon resting upon fresh cedar boughs. Happy days were they and it is a joy to look back upon years so pleasantly passed. I have shot game in nearly all of the states, but the month of October spent among woodcock in the Province of New Brunswick is, in my opinion, the most pleasing sport.

Why does this sad, melancholy-looking bird possess such an attraction for the sportsman? Not being very plentiful, the woodcock is the more eagerly sought for, and perhaps the real pleas-

On the Western Prairie

ure is the anticipation of success in destroying that which is rare and difficult to obtain. But I believe the true lover of Nature prefers to kill this bird because he loves to wander about the delightful places where it is most likely to lead him. Sometimes it is in the alder swamp along the brook; sometimes up among the birches on the hillside, or in the pasture by the big woods; and he enters every conceivable corner hoping to find some sign of the cock whose life he seeks. Not only are sportsmen charmed by these interesting birds, but all novices in the art of the chase are keen to hear a tale of woodcock shooting, when a good kill of grouse or quail fails to give any pleasure.

The birds breed as far East as Nova Scotia, their northern limit being about as far as Montreal. I believe some parts of Ontario used to afford good shooting. The New England, Eastern, and some of the Middle States formerly produced these birds in abundance. In Northern Florida you will find a few flying about in the winter twilight.

A friend of mine once shot two woodcock in January near Enterprise. These were the only ones he had ever seen so far South, and he had shot in Middle Florida many winters. The Western country does not seem to please their fancy; I suppose owing to their inability to obtain food in that region.

Woodcock are too delicate to withstand the

hardships and endure the cold winter of our northern climate, besides there are no soft spots to probe with tender bills, so about the full moon in October they begin to prepare for their long journey southward. Then the best of shooting may be had, for the birds make frequent stops during their flight, resting peacefully in the daytime among the alders or upon some sunny slope lined with glistening birches. They are often found among young oaks, and in almost every corner where suitable food can be obtained. While they are reposing in these secluded spots, the killing is at its height. Although the finest sport in most of the states is during the October moon, I have had better success along the coast of Rhode Island in November. This is owing, I believe, to the coming of the Nova Scotia birds, whose migration is later, and along the seashore. New Brunswick furnishes some birds until November, while Nova Scotia can boast of woodcock well into the month. About this time a light mantle of snow has slightly paled the bright crimson of the leaves and the dark green of the firs, causing destruction to the homes of the birds, and their sudden departure.

In their migration they are supposed to rise to a great height. It is not known why, but perhaps they find the upper air currents more favorable for their journey. They certainly cannot seek those

The Glistening Birches

altitudes for the purpose of observation, for their flight commences about twilight and is finished by early dawn. Besides, after dark and misty nights I have frequently found the birds more numerous. Woodcock have been known to arrive in the daytime in some parts of England. These birds, no doubt, come from Norway, and in crossing the water of the North Sea are probably blown out of their course, and forced either to perish or continue their flight to a place of refuge. This cannot very well happen in the States, as the migration is inland. The Nova Scotia birds are also fortunate, for they have only the Bay of Fundy to cross—about fifty miles of water; then their flight is along the coast, so they escape the dangers of the sea. In extended flights the speed of the woodcock is something marvelous. It is thought to be at times from one hundred and fifty to two hundred miles an hour. As their migration takes place at night, we can only judge their speed by comparing it with that of some bird which migrates in the daytime and whose speed is known; such as the crow, for instance, whose limit is about ninety miles an hour. If a crow can fly at this rate, what must the swift woodcock accomplish when, in advance of a furious gale, it is striving to reach some safe shelter hundreds of miles away?

One afternoon, in New Brunswick, toward the

end of October, I was having good sport with the cock, when suddenly a storm burst upon me, putting an end to all my pleasure. By the next morning four inches of snow had fallen throughout the Province, and even in Maine a white mantle covered the land. There was no shelter for the birds except beyond the storm; so it can readily be seen with what velocity they must have flown to have reached a safe refuge before daylight.

The "Virginian plover,"[1] in its migration from Labrador to Brazil, has an unbroken sea flight of about three thousand miles; and we may imagine with what swiftness it must fly to cross in a short time such an expanse of water. The curlew, snipe, duck, the canvasback especially, drop with a tremendous speed when descending from high altitudes; and there are many birds which develop great velocity when swooping downward from the sky. But the woodcock shows, at times, such pace that it is thought to surpass in swiftness all other birds.

Woodcock will often in the night, fly against telegraph wires and injure themselves severely. Along railways dead birds are frequently found. Bright lights seem to attract them, and when migrating many succumb to the brilliant glare of lighthouses.

Although the disappearance of the woodcock is a

[1] Fur, Fin, and Feather Series.

source of sorrow, their absence is made less painful by the presence of the cheerful junco, whose twitterings, resounding through the woods, brighten the picture, and give a bit of sunshine to him who loves the fields in all their whiteness. The snowbird always brings to my memory these pleasant verses:

When snow-like silence visible
Hath hushed the Summer bird,
Thy voice, a never-frozen rill
Of melody, is heard.

But when from Winter's lethargy
The buds begin to grow,
Thy voice is mute, and suddenly
Thou vanishest like snow.

I am not familiar with Southern shooting, as I have never followed the birds southward. After their long flight they should be left undisturbed to recuperate for their early return to the North. Hunting with the torch used to be practised constantly in the South, and in this manner thousands of birds were killed and shipped to market. It was a quick way of extermination, for it required only a light stick to knock them down as they flew toward the flame. I am glad to say that this practice has been prohibited by law. Summer shooting in the North is almost as great an evil, but most of

the states are seeing the wisdom of protecting the bird during the summer months, and are now enacting laws for its preservation. The birds come North about the last of March, but there are instances of much earlier arrivals.

Oh, every year hath its Winter,
And every year hath its rain—
But a day is always coming
When the birds go North again.

When new leaves swell in the forest,
And grass springs green on the plain,
And the alder's veins turn crimson—
And the birds go North again.

Oh, every heart hath its sorrow,
And every heart hath its pain—
But a day is always coming
When the birds go North again.

'T is the sweetest thing to remember
If courage be on the wane,
When the cold, dark days are over—
Why, the birds go North again.

A peculiar feature of their flight is that they seem to arrive all over the country about the same time. Even New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have the birds the same time we see them in the New England States; so I infer that the eastern wood-

cock begin their flight a little earlier than those bound for the more southerly states.

The early arrivals obtain their food by turning over the moist leaves and seizing the larvæ and worms beneath; but as soon as the frost disappears from the ground, they are off to the haunts of the highly prized angleworm, as it comes toward the surface seeking the warmth of spring. Most of their feeding is supposed to be done at night. Not all of it. I have killed woodcock in the daytime with worms hanging from their bills; and once I gazed on a cock while he was probing for a light breakfast, but that is the only instance I have ever seen them so occupied during the day. A friend of mine living in the country told me that at twilight two woodcock used to come regularly to feed upon his lawn, although his house was a long distance from any cover. Suddenly they ceased their visits, and he asked me for an explanation. He had already given one without knowing it. He had casually mentioned that his gardener usually watered the lawn just before sundown, and for a number of evenings he had done so; but after a few days he seemed to tire of his duty, and betook himself elsewhere. As soon as he left, the birds stopped coming. Woodcock are well aware that watering the ground causes angleworms to come to the surface. As these birds were dwelling some-

where in the neighborhood, they scented the attractions of this retreat, and feasted to their hearts' content. They have a wonderful faculty for discovering freshly watered lawns and gardens. I have known instances where woodcock have been flushed on the gardens of rather a large village.

It is very interesting to go to some meadow about twilight and watch the birds coming from the covers on their way to the feeding-ground. Many a night I have seen them dart from the thickets and with their delightful whistling speed past like the wind; then circling, drop upon the burnt ground beside me, where I, motionless, gazed upon their graceful bodies in the moonlit field. Any freshly-burned land is a great treat for them. It seems to have an immense attraction, and they will fly long distances to find it.

Walton says in "The Complete Angler" that if, in a dry time, you squeeze some walnut-tree leaves into water, then pour the mixture upon the ground, worms will presently appear. He also says salt and water will have the same effect. I have never tried the experiment, but have often wondered whether some chemical action does not take place on the burnt land which produces a deposit similar in taste to the infusion of walnut leaves, and

whether it may be this that the birds and worms are seeking in order to keep their digestive organs in good condition. Mountain sheep, goat and all deer will travel miles to obtain a bit of salt at some lick they have discovered in the recesses of the mountain; and if the deer family require a relish for their health, why should it not be equally necessary for the feathered tribe? I believe it is on this account that the birds love the burnt lands rather than for the desire of feeding.

The whistling sound we hear when the cock[1] are flushed, and when they fly about at night seeking the feeding-ground, is no doubt caused by the peculiar formation of the wings and the great rapidity of their motion. The wings are rather short and stiff, and when moved rapidly the passage of air through the primaries no doubt produces the whistling sound. Mr. Frank M. Chapman, in his interesting book on bird life, tells us that "certain wing-feathers of the woodcock are singularly modified as musical instruments. Sometimes the outer primaries are so narrowed that little but the shaft is left, when the rapid strokes are accompanied by a whistling sound. In other cases,

[1] Among sportsmen, the term "cock" is often used to denote woodcock of either sex; and also either as a singular or plural form.

the shaft of the wing-feathers may be much enlarged and horny, when the bird makes a singularly snapping sound in flight." In the daytime the whistling is heard only for a brief space, because when the cock is flushed he usually does not fly far, and as soon as the wings move less rapidly the sound ceases. At night the whistling is heard much longer because the birds make a more extended flight. I have never heard the sound when the bird is making a zigzag course. This can be accounted for by his lessened speed and by a different motion of the wings. Some sportsmen contend that the sound is produced by the bill. This is quite improbable. I have held cock by the bill, and then as they flapped their wings violently I have heard the same whistling, which shows that the wings rather than the bill are the cause of the delightful music. But the love-song the male bird sings to his mate is believed to be entirely vocal.

Many woodcock are killed at night. This is done by taking a stand on some road or meadow across which the birds must fly on their way to feed, and if you are fortunate in selecting the right place, for a few moments at twilight you are quite sure of a fair bag. If you know the feeding-ground, a larger score can be made in a very short time. As

A Good Stand

this kind of shooting is most destructive, I would advise against its practice.

Two years ago while cock-shooting in Canada, a friend asked me to go with him one night to a cover he had named "Ladysmith," and have a try at the birds as they came in to feed. We arrived on the ground at the proper time:

> In the air of the evening, humid and soft,
> Was the keen odor of the ploughed fields, and
> We went out together upon the hillside,
> While the cricket shrilled there below in the meadows.

We had hardly stationed ourselves at a fallen tree when a dark streak arose from the thicket close beside us, and darting through the moonlight disappeared whistling its joyful ziraleet among the birches.

"That bird was evidently too fast for you," remarked my friend. "Shoot a little quicker."

"Yes, he was a bit rapid," I replied. "He must have been one of the scouts sent out from the fort to investigate the advance. But how difficult to see them at this time of night! I do not think I care for this kind of shooting. It is like killing a salmon in the dark."

"Don't mention salmon-fishing just now," exclaimed my friend, as he too fired at a bird's

shadow topping the alders at his left. "It is the grandest sport, and my mind always wanders to that bright, crisp morning in June when I landed through your kindness a forty-five and a forty-three-pound fish. I shall never forget it."

> Long time he, following cautious, scans the fly,
> And oft attempts to seize it; but as oft
> The dimpled water speaks his jealous fear.
> At last, while haply o'er the shaded sun
> Passes a cloud, he, desperate, takes the death
> With sullen plunge. At once he darts along,
> Deep-struck, and runs out all the lengthened line;
> Then seeks the farthest shore, the "sheltering" rock,
> The shaded bank, his old secure abode,
> And springs aloft, and flounces round the pool,
> Indignant of the guile. With yielding hand
> That feels him still, yet to his furious course
> Gives way, you, now retiring, following now
> Across the stream, exhaust his idle rage;
> Till, floating broad upon his breathless side,
> And to his fate abandoned, to the shore
> You gayly drag your unresisting prize.

"Many a night I have sat by my hearth dreaming of that one day of my life on the Cascapedia—Did I not tell you? We have now lost the best of the shooting, and all through my romancing about salmon-fishing, when we should have been paying attention to the dusky little shadows which have been darting around us for the past twenty minutes."

Ladysmith

"Never mind, Joe; let us leave them until the morning. Although we have been repulsed in our attack upon Ladysmith by night, we may hope for better luck on the morrow."

"I don't know about that. You see, these birds are like the Canadians and the British. When they take a stand they are hard to dislodge. Day after day I have been trying to bring destruction to their stronghold, but as often as I return, their ranks are well recruited, hence my christening 'Ladysmith.' It is one of the best covers I know in this section of the country. But the moon is getting high; the birds have ceased flying, and there is Butler calling from the trap, so let us hasten, for we have some distance to go before reaching the cabin."

I have read that woodcock will use every strategy to induce angleworms to come to the surface; that they will often tap upon the ground with their bill in order to produce an effect similar to raindrops. Then the worms, believing a light shower to be falling, come to the surface to quench their parched throats, and are eagerly devoured. This tale may be exaggerated, but the birds have great intelligence. I believe them equal to almost anything. They are "capable de tout," as Voltaire said of the prophet Habakkuk.

One October evening about twilight I strolled

from my cabin down to an old stone bridge which spanned a small brook running at the foot of a hill.

Not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

It was a fine feeding place to watch, I often went there to see the birds as they came in. While on the bridge, meditating, and blowing puffs of tobacco into the cool, crisp air, I wondered if my friends at home in all their gaiety were as much at peace with the world as I, with my gun and the birds and Nature, alone in the wilderness. As I mused, a bunch of dark feathers shot out of the clouds and, swooping downward, brushed past me, alighting not ten feet in front of where I was sitting. Now was the longed-for chance to watch the bird in his evening's pleasure. As soon as he alighted he seemed most anxious to assure himself that no danger lurked in the air. Being satisfied about his safety, he began to prepare for his evening meal. He turned his head from one side to the other; then slowly straightening, tapped the ground with his bill in three different places until at last he seemed to find a choice spot. With a slight flutter of the wings, he lowered his head, sending the long bill deeper and deeper into the moist earth, until I presume the sensitive point

touched the wriggling creature which good Walton prized so highly in his musings by the primrose bank.

In genial Spring, beneath the quivering shade,
Where cooling vapors breathe along the mead,
The patient fisher takes his silent stand,
Intent, his angle trembling in his hand;
With looks unmoved, he hopes the scaly breed,
And eyes the dancing cork and bending reed.

By this time it had become so dark I was unable to see whether the woodcock had labored in vain. It was a bit disappointing, for I had hoped to see the finish of his evening's task. Not wishing to disturb the bird, I withdrew quietly from the bridge and returned to the cabin, where a small table set with snowy linen and delicate china awaited me before the burning logs.

The "spruce-scented" smoke so gracefully curled
Above the "green firs" from my cabin so dear;
And I thought, If there 's peace to be found in the world,
A heart that was humble might hope for it here.

I distinctly saw this bird touch the ground with his bill in three different places before he attempted to probe. It is likely that others have seen the same thing happen, hence the tradition of "tapping for worms" may have originated. I do

not believe Pan so favors the woodcock as to let him pull forth a worm at every boring. Probably he is obliged to do more than that for his daily bread. This is indicated by the numerous works one sees about the fields and streams. He may probe in a place six or seven inches in diameter, yet obtain only one or two worms. Even then I should consider him fortunate, for in my boyhood days, when digging bait for trout-fishing, the most promising places seldom furnished more.

The birds are regular little gourmands, and their ravenous appetite is owing, no doubt, to rapid digestion. They love to feed near water, for they are fastidious, I am told, concerning their slender bills, frequently dipping them into pools to remove the clinging mud. Of the many cock I have shot, I have noticed only a few whose bills were untidy. The rest were clean and smooth, showing that woodcock may not neglect the morning's dip.

Until the end of October, in the states, the early morning is the best time of day for hunting woodcock.

> Sweet is the breath of morn; her rising sweet
> With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
> When first on this delightful land he spreads
> His Orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit and flower,
> Glistening with dew.

Then they are usually near the edge of the thick-

A Good Feeding Place

ets, and are also found just outside. Later in the season, when it gets colder, it is unnecessary to arrive on the ground so early, for the birds seem loath to leave the warmth of the sun and do not enter the cover quite so soon.

It is always best to take an hour for the midday meal. Besides refreshing one for the afternoon, it gives the dog the much-needed rest, and this will add many a cock to the score.

In New Brunswick I am seldom in the covers before nine o'clock; but that country is the land of the woodcock, and well has he chosen. There, from his home among the silvery birches on some sunny slope, he gazes on the dark green forest, where roams the lordly moose along the banks of the glistening St. John as it flows toward the sea. There also comes the hunted caribou to quench his thirst with the cooling waters. And when the light of the October moon rises above the green firs in the distance and casts its beams across the silent fields, the trembling deer steal forth, adding beauty to the enchanted spot. All this can the cock behold, as, seeking his evening meal, he casts a light shadow about the hills while his whistling wings send forth the song to Night:

> When I arise and see the day I sigh for thee;
> When the light rises high and the dew is gone,
> And noon lies heavy on flower and tree,

And weary Day turns to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sigh for thee!

Yes, the noble bird dwells in a paradise.

I have used the terms probing and boring to describe the action of the birds when they stick their bills into the ground in search of worms. In the parlance of shooting they are synonymous. While the word boring is perhaps more frequently used, probing seems the correct expression; for the birds certainly do not bore, but rather force their bills into the earth.

Woodcock may have an acute sense of hearing, but I doubt if they are able to detect any sounds made by worms beneath the surface. Instinct tells them where the worms are abundant, and the upper mandible of their long bill is so sensitive that when in the ground the delicate nerves can easily locate the tempting morsel even though the bill itself may not be quite in contact with the prey. Mr. Gordon Trumbull tells us that "the bird can use as a finger the upper mandible of its sensitive bill." This flexibility must assist the bird greatly in procuring food; for the upper mandible, being able to twist in either direction, and being longer than the lower and a trifle bent at the point, the bird can seize and pull up a worm more easily than if both mandibles were stiff and of the same length.

When the bill enters the ground the upper mandible, being longer and larger at the point, prepares a way for the lower; and as soon as the under surface of the tip of the upper mandible touches a worm, "a downward thrust," as Mr. Trumbull says, "is only needed to push it between both mandibles, when it is easily drawn forth." The bird when feeding upon the surface could pick up its food easier if both mandibles were the same length. Nature, however, has wisely adapted the bill; for the bird's principal diet is below the ground.

I have seen a wounded woodcock steady himself with his bill as he endeavored to walk toward a cover; and once I saw a cock use his bill to assist himself in rising. When I observed him, he was squatting upon the ground, his bill poked out in front and resting upon some leaves. My dog was pointing beside me, and as I gave the command to charge, the bird became a bit restless. Presently he began to rise, and bracing his bill against the ground supported himself until he had assumed an erect position. Even then he seemed loath to lift this useful member. This bird must have lived a luxurious life and was probably in prime condition; but there was no way of gratifying my curiosity, for I was so intent watching him that when he flushed I missed.

Besides assisting in procuring food, this long bill, no doubt, is a help in many ways.

When seeking woodcock, always look in wet places on the sunny side of the hill, for it is there they love to bask in the rays of the sun. Sometimes you will find them where it is very dry, but they usually prefer to rest near springs and upon moist land. If the day be windy, they are most likely to be found in some sheltered spot protected from the chilly blasts, even if the sun's rays fail to penetrate the foliage. They dislike to feel the breeze, and will start wildly, thirty or forty yards ahead of the dog, making the shooting very difficult. It is quite the reverse if the day be mild, for then the birds always lie close and when flushed will fly only a short distance. A day of this kind is ever desired by the lover of the sport.

You will often see numerous markings among the alders and birches, indicating the presence of many birds; but this does not always bring good shooting, for the birds may have left the previous night on their journey South, and disappointment is the sportsman's lot.

In a woodcock country the birds are usually found in covers where cattle feed. They have a fondness for ground cut by the animals' hoofs, and will often remain until very cold weather in this kind of cover. They seem to know

that cattle are their friends, and are frequently seen feeding among them.

Even in cold weather woodcock are often found under the alders, sitting on little hillocks surrounded by water; but I have always noticed that a bit of sunlight streams in, giving warmth to the places which they had chosen for the few days' rest. It is not pleasant to work these covers. The alders are usually low and thick, making it very difficult to see the birds when they rise. After they are driven out they usually fly to the big woods; but there they seem to be wild, and will flush before the dog can scent them, so very few are killed.

One day in New Brunswick from a similar cover I flushed nine woodcock and killed only two birds. The others flew to the woods and were lost. The next day I shot two more on this ground. About a week later I returned to the same cover, expecting to have good sport, but unfortunately all the birds were gone. This frequently happens, for they are continually changing their covers, especially if it is about the time the birds are making ready for the flight South.

During dry seasons the forest ant-hills are favorite hunting places of the cock. They delight to poke their bills into these mounds of industry in search of the insects, and at twilight much destruction takes place in their homes.

It is most singular how reluctant woodcock are at times to leave some favorite place. I remember starting three birds from a few alders situated on a knoll sloping toward a small brook. For three days I visited this cover and always found the same number—no more, no less. The first day I killed two; the second, one; and on the third day, three. Returning one night from a day's shooting, a friend who was with me said as we were passing the cover: "I wonder if there are three more cock nestling at the edge of the alders?" We were both a bit tired, but our curiosity being aroused, out we jumped and tenderly lifting the eager Bob, carefully approached the dark thicket that stood so silent in the twilight.

"Look!" exclaimed my friend. "Bob has again found the birds, for there he stands as steady as yonder rock."

A few steps forward, and out went three small shadows, separating in the distance to meet again, no doubt, and relate to astonished friends their miraculous escape; for I missed them with both barrels.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock loves the lonely dells;
The soaring hern the fountains;
Through lofty groves the cushat roves,

Finding the Birds

The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush;
The spreading thorn the linnet.

A woodcock, when he is first flushed, usually flies only a short distance; but if you watch his flight and mark where he went down, you will be sure to find him close to the place where he seemed to alight. The second time he is started he makes a more extended flight; but the third time, one has to seek far and wide before being rewarded for his trouble. The bird will often, after being flushed, circle and go back to the very place from which he first arose; and it is owing to this trick that the sportsman is often led astray.

I do not think full-grown woodcock are very much frightened when first flushed, for when they alight they do not seem at all anxious to conceal their location. If they were much alarmed, would they not, like the quail, hold their scent and conceal themselves in the depth of some swamp? No; the woodcock is a game bird. He is not afraid. Instead of contracting into a little bunch and nestling close to the ground, he prefers the chase, and delights to lead the sportsman a merry dance about the covers, until at last, wearying of the sport, away he flies to some distant thicket, safe in his retreat. It is quite different with the quail.

When they are flushed they become very much frightened, and as soon as they alight they contract their bodies and close their feathers, hoping by this means to prevent the least bit of odor from escaping. When they think all danger has passed, and that they are quite safe from any harm, they again relax their feathers. This permits the odor to permeate the air, bringing delight to the anxious setter and death to the incautious bird. I have seen a quail alight in an open field not seventy yards from where I was standing, and my dog unable to scent the bird, although it was not more than four feet from his nose. Thinking the dog might be a bit off, or that perhaps the bird had run away, I went to a fence not far distant to rest. In about fifteen minutes I commenced to imitate the call of the mother. Presently I was rewarded, for the young bird answered; so returning to the spot, the dog readily scented the quail. This shows the power they have in controlling the odor which exudes from their body.

There are two feathers on the woodcock which are often used by artists. They are delicately pointed, and are situated one on either side of the outer primaries, and known as the painter's feathers. The English snipe also have the same kind of feathers. These birds are, I believe, the only ones which can boast of such distinction.

I have read that woodcock are adepts in the art of surgery, and the Rev. William J. Long, in a very interesting article on the subject, says that he once saw a woodcock covering its leg with a mixture of fiber and moist clay, the preparation being applied and smoothed most carefully with the bill. At last, seeming satisfied with its work, the cock rose and flew into a thicket. It was presumed that the leg was broken, and the mixture had been used as a substitute for a splint. Mr. Long also says that a friend of his shot a woodcock with one of its legs partly encased in clay. On removing this, it was a great surprise to find that there had been a fracture; but the bones had knitted, and the leg was nearly well.

Mr. L. H. De Visme Shaw, in his "Natural History of the Woodcock," refers to an article by Professor Victor Fatio, who says that a woodcock "when wounded makes for himself with the end of his beak and feathers a very ingenious dressing, and knows how to apply a plaster to a bleeding wound, or to fix a solid ligature around a broken limb. Twice he found woodcock which had ligatures of feathers tied and twisted around the part where the bone had been fractured. The most curious case was that of a woodcock which had both its legs fractured by a shot, and which was only picked up the following day. The bird

had put feather plasters and bandages around both legs, using one bandage only for one leg. As it was unable to use its claws, it could not get rid of some feathers which had stuck and curled around the end of his bill and which were causing it to die of hunger.''[1] Although I have never had an experience of this kind, I have killed woodcock which were frightfully scarred and looked as though some agency other than Nature's had been called upon to patch them up. I once shot a woodcock with a plaster of feathers on its breast. When I removed the plaster, I noticed that the wound was in splendid condition and healing well.

While examining a quail which I had shot in Northern Kansas, I discovered that one foot was missing. Instead of the leg bone protruding, as I expected, I found that the skin nearly covered the end of the injured member, and there was only a slight swelling. The bird was brought home, and again most carefully examined, but still I could not account for the neat mending of the injury. I did not then think that ''Bob White'' could assist Nature in the art of healing; but since reading Professor Fatio's and Dr. Long's experiences, and other tales of surgery, I am convinced that our knowledge of the bird world is very limited, and

[1] Mr. Shaw states that the above quotation is an extract from the report of a lecture delivered by Professor Fatio before the Geneva Physiological and Natural History Society on April 19, 1888.

The Hen and Cock

eventually some of the thousands of varieties which are known to science will convince us of their ability to alleviate their sufferings.

August is the moulting season, and woodcock begin to lose their feathers. During this time little is known of their habits. They disappear from their accustomed haunts and are difficult to locate. During the month I have occasionally seen a few in the cornfields, where they no doubt came to feed. In September the birds reappear from their seclusion and are again seen flying about the fields, but they are thinly clad and not fit for sport. It is not till October that they appear in any numbers, and even then their raiment is not complete; but about the middle of the month they are in prime condition and capable of taxing the skill of the best shots. They vary in size and weight, especially the hens, which often top the scale at ten and eleven ounces. Sex is indicated by their size, the cock being a smaller and lighter bird than the hen; but he is a pompous creature. He rises quickly, and when flushed is more difficult as a mark.

The pathetic eyes of this bird appeal to me most strongly. These large round orbs, set well back in the head and beautiful as those of Ali, look into one's very soul. They seem to express confidence rather than fear, and when a bird is held captive, resignation is depicted in his sad countenance. I suppose Nature has so placed their eyes as to ena-

ble the birds when feeding to detect danger in the rear. Their position is not only a means of protection, but is of great service; for when obstinate dainties refuse to come forth, the eyes can guide the bill to extra depths without becoming filled with mud or water. But, the two large orbs peeping out from the leaves often betray the bird's presence.

Of the great number of enemies with which young woodcock have to contend, one of the most destructive is the household cat. You can often see it sneaking about the alders, ever ready to spring upon its prey. Not woodcock only, but many young quail and grouse are victims of the artful Thomas.

I wondered how the birds managed their long, thin bills when resting on the ground, until one day I discovered His Majesty reposing in the sunlight under some birches. He was about ten feet in front of my dog and seemed utterly oblivious to his surroundings. Both eyes were open, however, and his bill resting upon some leaves, was pointed directly in front. So I presume this is his natural position when taking a siesta.

Woodcock, jack-snipe and quail will often lie so close that one can approach almost near enough to touch them. This, I suppose, is owing to their

knowledge that the color of their plumage harmonizes with that of their surroundings and enables them to escape detection. A friend tells me that he has stroked the hen bird when it was on its nest, and instead of being frightened it seemed to enjoy the sensation. I have picked up a woodcock and also a quail when they were squatting on the ground, but I have never been able to get near enough to touch the foxy snipe. The woodcock did not appear to be in the least alarmed; he, on the contrary, seemed rather indifferent to the situation. But the quail was greatly excited and tried to bury itself beneath the leaves. It was so frightened that it dared not attempt to fly.

I do not believe that woodcock depend entirely upon coloration for safety from man. It is simply their wits which keep a good many out of trouble. Sometimes when a bird is flushed it will top the alders and alight not twenty feet away in the open field, remaining just long enough to be seen darting around the end of the cover as you break through the brush into the opening. This is very disappointing, but it shows him capable of tricks; and these and many others will he teach you when you follow him about his haunts.

They cast us off, as a huntsman his pack,
For they know when they please they can
whistle us back.

Coloration no doubt helps greatly to keep them safe from attacks by birds and animals of prey, but from the designs of man their wits are often their salvation. When accompanied by a dog I find the birds are less desirous of making my acquaintance; yet even then I can sometimes approach almost near enough to touch them, provided they have not been previously flushed.

From my experience with woodcock I find that they dislike, more than any other game bird, to be disturbed during the daytime. For at night they love to revel in gaiety, and many are the stately functions these birds must attend—some banquet held in the emerald-dotted meadow surrounded by the dark alders, which stand as sentinels guarding the happy assemblage. It is here they love to frolic and dance to the music of brooks whose crystal waters sparkle like gems as they flow in the moonlight.

Sounds of distant mirth are borne by the breeze to this merry party; for others who receive less homage love to roam the wood while clad in its somber hues. The piping of the frogs in their placid home expresses joy at the coming of the night, and even the nocturnal hexapods are heard chanting the vespers. The weird cry of the night-owl also breaks the stillness as he bewails his displeasure in not being commanded to the royal feast.

And the owl hath a bride who is fond and bold,
  And loveth the wood's deep gloom;
And with eyes like the shine of the moonstone cold,
  She awaiteth her ghastly groom.
Not a feather she moves; not a carol she sings,
  As she waits in her tree so still;
But when her heart heareth his flapping wings,
  She hoots out her welcome shrill.

These and other sounds of delight and fear are wafted to the tired little bodies who at last, wearying of the dance, seek the repast served throughout the field. No decorations add beauty to the scene, for night has veiled the bright faces of the flowers and they stand with drooping heads. Is it any wonder that after these nightly festivities woodcock decline to be disturbed, and prefer to slumber during the day?

A woodcock may be kept in confinement, and he quickly becomes attached to those who attend him. An abundance of worms is necessary for his diet, otherwise he will soon pine away. The worms should be placed in a large bowl of earth, five or six inches deep, so the bird can have its customary boring. Given plenty of water, he will soon become reconciled to a life behind the bars. The woodcock loves warmth, and delights to bask before the fire or in the heat of the sun, giving no little pleasure to him who has shown affection.

THE DOGS

He was a gash an' faithful tyke
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke.
His honest sonsie, baws'nt face
Aye gat him friends in ilka place.
His breast was white; his touzie back
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gaucie tail wi' upward curl
Hung owre his hurdies wi' a swirl.

TO be successful in woodcock shooting, you must be accompanied by a dog especially broken for hunting the birds. Either a setter or pointer is generally employed; but there are some lovers of the sport who are still inclined to the old method and prefer the cocker spaniel. When the cocker is used, the sportsman usually remains on the outside of the cover, allowing the dog to go in and drive the birds out, trusting that when they are flushed they will fly toward him. They will not always do this, and as they are just as likely to fly in some other direction, many birds escape. A well-trained cocker,

though, should send most of the birds toward his master. Without regard to the size of the bag, I do not think hunting over a cocker so satisfactory as with the setter or pointer; for being outside the thickets, it is almost impossible to see the dog working up to the birds, and this in my opinion is the most interesting part of the sport.

An old cock-shooter some years ago asked me to have a day with him on his favorite ground in New Brunswick. He assured me grand sport, and was most anxious that I should see the wonderful working qualities of his black cocker. I readily accepted the invitation, and suggested that I should like to bring my setter Kate—as fine a little lady as ever entered the alders, and as sweet in disposition as the fair girl for whom she was named. The suggestion was well received, so at daylight on the following morning we jumped into my friend's shooting trap and whirled eight miles over a good road to Loch Lomond. An hour's pleasant drive through the bracing air, and we pull up at a tumbledown fence enclosing a good bit of cover. Leaving the servant with instructions to meet us on the other side, we wander across the field and hold a council of war at the edge of the thicket. As this was not particularly good ground, and my friend not having much faith in Kate's abilities, it was decided that she and I should enter the cover

while my friend was to remain outside and have the "kill" as he expressed it, as the birds bid us adieu on their way out.

Looking at Kate, as she turned her large, earnest eyes toward me, I say to her: "Do you know what you must do now, my lady? Remember the teaching of your ancestors. Be staunch, and, like your dear mother, let not one escape. Show the black cocker that none can equal you; that you are queen of the sport. Now here we are, and be careful." She seemed to understand, for turning quickly away she flew. Hardly had we entered the cover when the quivering, silken body became as rigid as marble, like a beautiful statue standing before my eyes. Lady Kate has scented her game, and gazes, motionless, into space. "Glorious!" I exclaimed. "Never will the black cocker of Canada rival thy praises." It seemed cruel to spoil the picture by taking the life of the cock that was nestling so quietly in its fancied safety not ten feet away. But I was there to kill and not to romance; so taking a step forward I flushed the bird, at the same time shouting "Mark!" to my friend waiting outside. A flame spits forth from the sixteen bore, and a woodcock falls dead. "Bravo, Kate," I exclaimed; "now bring it here." And away she goes, returning quickly to lay at my feet the ob-

Ten Fine Birds

ject of our sport. And so we quartered through the cover, now and then crying "Mark!"[1] and sending forth thin puffs of smoke into the clear, still atmosphere, until we have ten fine birds resting in safety. Once more we find ourselves out in the daylight, and my friend approaching in the distance. "Do you know," he said, "I have not seen a cock since you went in, and I have been following you all around the cover. Where did they go? You shot eleven times." "Ask the little lady," I replied; "she will tell you."

We had grand sport that bright, clear day, tumbling over the beautiful birds in the covers near the lake. As the afternoon waned and the pink rays of the setting sun were reflected on Loch Lomond, warning us of the approaching night, I thought of those charming lines:

> Sweet day! So cool; so calm; so bright;
> The bridal of the earth and sky:
> The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
> For thou must die.

Poor black Cockie was in disgrace, for bird after bird had been flushed and lost. He tried hard to please and worked well; but Lady Kate was the winner, and by night the old gentle-

[1] An expression used by sportsmen when a bird is flushed.

man was singing songs of praise for the black and white maiden, and poor Cockie's heart was sad. My friend has since become a convert to my view, and each year during the October moon he may be seen accompanied by a faithful companion wending his way to some cover where a few hours are pleasantly passed; and a brace or two of cock are brought home to delight the soul of poor black Cockie and bring forth reminiscences of the happy days when he too could chase the whistling bird, and

> Sing of its whistle, a whistle of mirth;
> Sing of its whistle, the pride of his birth.

Lady Kate was both intelligent and affectionate, and well up in the art of seeking the birds. She was the first to enter the covers of New Brunswick and convince the natives of the superiority of the setter. For a long time she found favor in the eyes of all, and her name was a delight throughout that country. Many a noonday meal we have had together while resting from the sport on some sunny hillside far from the busy world. But time changes all things, and now the happy days are past; for Lady Kate has gone to her quiet home across the Great Divide.

> O, snatched away in beauty's bloom,
> On thee shall press no ponderous tomb,

Black Cockie

But on thy turf shall roses rear
Their leaves, the earliest of the year.

May her body rest in peace!

One of the advantages of the setter is his long coat, which prevents briars from hurting him, and also protects him in cold weather. But his chief virtue is his way of "pointing" or "standing" a bird. As soon as he scents the game, if he is well broken, he will immediately slacken speed and with poised head gradually approach within ten to twenty feet of where it is lying. When he is confident that the bird is near, he stops, and full of excitement, stretches out his body with every muscle strained to its utmost and stands a picture before you. One sees him in all kinds of attitudes; sometimes with a foot lifted; now kneeling, and often sitting on his haunches, but always rigid and unmovable. As soon as the sportsman walks ahead and flushes the bird, tension is over, and the dog assumes his normal condition. If the bird is killed, the setter should be told to retrieve it, which he does by carefully taking it in his mouth and bringing it to his master. He should never be allowed to rush for the bird as soon as it is shot at, or to retrieve until told to do so, because he is liable to flush other birds. Frequently the dog is broken to flush the game. This is a bad way, for it is apt to make him wild and unsteady.

Woodcock, like grouse and quail, as already said, exude a certain odor, and it is owing to this that the dogs are able to locate the birds. Sometimes the scent will remain so long on the ground after the cock has flown that the setter, unless he has a particularly fine nose, will often mistake it for the bird and make a false point. This is considered unpardonable; but it very seldom happens with a dog of fine nose, unless he is a little "off his feed."

Always be kind and gentle to the dumb companion, but be sure you make him understand you are his master. When he comes to you for a caress, stroke him quietly as you would the gentlest maid. Remember he cannot tell you his desires other than by the expression of his sad eyes, which are often

> Raised as a mute prayer to the starred heaven;
> And I, who hear what he cannot say, love him
> Because he is silent.

Sometimes when he fails in the field, think that he may be ailing, and instead of abusing him or losing your temper, go to some quiet brook and bathe his head and feet with the cooling water. Let him rest a few moments; show him that you understand his feelings. Then when he is well he will not forget the kindness. He will enter every

My Two Companions

nook and corner in his endeavor to please. If it is necessary to give him punishment, be sure that the dog knows why he deserves it. Then the offence will not occur again.

Never shoot at the dog for disobedience. It is most cruel, and seldom does any good. Should an accident happen, you will always regret it. A friend and I were shooting quail in Northern Kansas over a delightful setter named Bess. The dog had been working splendidly until a covey flushed wild under the very nose of our black lady. Away flew the birds, and away went Bess in her endeavor to round up a few of the scattered birds for her master's pleasure. It was a great crime to break away at the rise, but onward she sped, oblivious to the entreaties of one who a few moments since commanded her easily. "Come back," he shouted. Then, suddenly, a flash—and the deed is done! For Bess, wheeling unexpectedly, received a small chilled shot in one of her eyes. With a howl of pain she rushed back to lick the hand of him who had maimed her.

Sir, when I flew to seize the bird
In spite of your command,
A louder voice than yours I heard,
And harder to withstand.

You cried: "Forbear!" But in my breast
A mightier cried: "Proceed!"

'T was Nature, Sir, whose strong behest
Impelled me to the deed.

We carried Bess to a stream, and bathed her swollen face; then lifting her quickly into the trap, we hurried the moaning setter back to the village, only to be told that there was no hope. The eye which used to look so lovingly into the master's face was gone. Our shooting trip ended, and remorse followed my friend for many a day.

I always have my dogs broken to the whistle; it is the simpler and less tiresome way. Continual shouting is no small exertion, and one needs all his reserve force in a day's tramp.

What are the most desirable colors for a hunting dog? Black, white and tan I consider to be the best combination. It is easily seen in the thicket, and yet it is not too conspicuous. Lemon, liver and white—the blue Belton—any mixture will answer; but pure colors are not desirable. A black dog is hard to see. A pure white setter, although very beautiful, attracts too much attention, and, some contend, alarms the birds.

I shall not attempt to describe the different breeds of the setter. Let the sportsman select a well-bred black, white and tan, and he will be content.

The dogs should be hunted without their collars, for treacherous snags and roots often cause much

The First Retrieve

discomfort to our companions when burdened with this sometimes necessary ornament. Once when my setter was retrieving from deep water, a snag caught in her collar, for a few moments I was somewhat alarmed at her dangerous position. I had considerable difficulty in extricating her. Another time when she was hunting in a thick cover an annoying root which had poked itself through the ground grasped the unyielding leather around her throat and tumbled her over only too quickly, causing a severe sprain in one of her legs. My dogs' work has often been impeded by underbrush clinging to the straps around their necks. Besides being a source of danger, the dogs are more comfortable without collars, and now I always allow them to hunt with necks free. They are no doubt pleased at my thoughtfulness, for I notice that as soon as they are released from their burden, away they will scamper with heads erect, and sniff the air more eagerly for a scent of the dainty cock. If you are an advocate of the decoration, and have a speedy and wide ranger, *i.e.*, a dog which hunts very fast, it is a good plan when in the brush to attach a small bell to his collar, for he will often be out of sight. Then if the sound of the bell ceases you will know that he is sure to be pointing game, when you can gradually work up to him. For my own shooting I pre-

fer a slow dog, because I love to see him hunt the birds before pointing. In an open country a speedy dog is the best, as it saves you a lot of tramping.

Hunting with a brace of setters is the acme of sport; but the dogs have to be so thoroughly trained that one seldom attains the perfection of the art. Of course you can make a good bag with almost any two setters that will point the birds; but while one is crawling up to the cock you have just flushed from the path, the other may be roaming the woods, and you are in agony lest he should come bouncing along utterly indifferent to the crouching position of his mate who is moving so carefully forward. Just as you feel safe from intrusion he suddenly breaks through the brush as happy as a lark, and running past the place where the cock alighted, sends him darting across the opening into the big woods. The dog quickly stops and drops at the flush, but it is too late. Had he been better trained he would have stopped and remained motionless as soon as he saw the crouching attitude of his mate. This manoeuver is called backing. But unless two dogs understand each other, there is very little pleasure in this style of shooting. I have hunted with many a brace of setters, but in one instance only have I been satisfied with their work. You can have bet-

Stopping Too Late

ter sport and kill more birds with one dog well up in the art than with any number of braces unless they are exceptionally well broken.

The pointer should not be used in a country where there are many briars. His coat is too thin, and it is cruel to make this faithful companion enter those piercing thickets, to come forth with blood dripping from his body. Although I love to see him work, he should be hunted only in a moderately warm and open country. As the pointer's method of hunting game birds is identical with the setter's, I will not attempt its description.

When working a cover, be as quiet as you possibly can. Do not keep calling the dog when he is trying his utmost to find game. If an intelligent setter is continually interfered with, he will become nervous and not do well. You may think he is not working the best part of the cover, and call for him to go to the opposite side; then not finding birds you make him try in another direction. And so you continue to worry him until he is utterly bewildered, and in such a state of excitement that he does not know what to do. Finally his nose will get so hot that he cannot scent the game, and many a cock that might have been added to the score if the dog had been allowed his freedom will be flushed and lost.

A setter with good bird knowledge understands

the warm corners the cock love to lie in; and as soon as he approaches the cover will generally lead you to the right places. If he fails to find birds, it is bad form to be angry and blame the dog. You should rather encourage him. Do not let him see that you are disappointed. Go and rest beside some fallen tree. Talk to him about the woods and fields. Ask him if he can see the young oaks on yonder hill resplendent in their glorious tints of radiant crimson, and, still further away, the silver birches trembling at the destruction which is soon to take place among their glistening leaves. Tell him also of

The lofty woods, the forest wide and long,
Adorned with leaves and branches, fresh and green,
In whose cool bowers the birds with many a song
Do welcome with their quire the Summer's Queen;
The meadows fair, where Flora's gifts among
Are intermixt, with verdant grass between,
The silvery scaled fish that softly swim
Within the sweet brook's crystal watery stream.

Then let him know how thankful you are for all the beauties of nature, and that you have health and strength to be afield among the birds this bright October day. A short walk across the open, and by the time the next cover is entered, all disappointment is forgotten, and dog and man go on their way rejoicing.

The Few Moments' Rest

In starting for the day's killing, if you are to drive to the cover do not let the dogs jump in and out of the trap, for they are liable to strain themselves severely. You can easily lift them. It is only a little trouble, and they are sure to show their appreciation of your thoughtfulness by wagging the tail or with some other affectionate gesture. One of my best dogs hurt his leg so badly in jumping out of the trap that he was unable to work for several days.

Put some hay in the trap for the dogs to lie on. It is comforting, and helps to keep them warm when coming home at night. A light blanket thrown over them if they are wet will stave off a cold, and keep that dreaded rheumatism at a distance.

Try to have their dinner ready soon after they return, and let it be a banquet; for who deserves a richer feast than your staunch companion of the field? They are very fastidious as regards the evening meal, and most particular that it should be served on time, so do not disappoint them. Let them eat, drink and be merry, for their life is short and the happy days but few.

Some dogs when released from their kennels in the morning become so excited when they know they are going for a hunt that they always refuse early breakfast and prefer to go forth with empty stomach to the delight of the hillside. One of

my excitable maidens never deigns to notice the early meal, but as the day wears on and the pangs of hunger begin, I find her ever willing to devour the light repast served in the warmth of the sun as we rest beside some rushing brook, telling tales of the morning kill. It is always a pleasure to share with her as she sits beside me, gazing longingly into my face.

Before the dogs go to their kennels, they should have their legs and feet bathed with a mixture of warm water and alcohol. This prevents soreness and stiffness in the joints. Examine their feet most carefully, as small burrs and briars sometimes lodge between the toes, and these, if not discovered, may cause lameness. If you follow my advice and pay attention to the welfare of your hunting companion, you will be well repaid by the increased endeavors on his part to please. Then you will go joyfully afield together.

A joy beyond the tongue's expressive power
My heart in Autumn weather fills and thrills!
And I would rather stalk the hills,
Descending to my bower
Nightly, by the sweet spirit of Peace attended,
Than pine where life is splendid.

An Old Comrade

THE GUN

IN selecting a gun you should be most particular that it fits properly; *i.e.*, the object aimed at should be in line of vision with the eye, the breech and the sight at muzzle without bending your head. To obtain this result, when you raise the gun you must elevate the elbow; then when the stock rests against the shoulder the elbow will be parallel to or a few inches above it. The higher the elbow is elevated above the shoulder the better, for it brings the object in line of vision without the least bending of the head, and this is the correct and artistic way of holding a gun at the moment of pulling the trigger. A gun with a two and one half inch drop[1] can be handled in this manner easily, but as soon as you use one with a greater drop, the graceful and easy position disappears, and awkwardness becomes apparent. The head will be bent to find the line of sight; the

[1] The distance the end of the stock falls below the barrel.

arms will be pressed tightly against the side, and with roached back you will present a most uninteresting figure to the game cock whose destruction you seek. Nearly all beginners in the art of shooting select guns with low drops. The reason is they have never been taught to raise the elbow as they raise the gun; consequently when the gun is thrown to the shoulder, they depend upon finding the object aimed at by bending the head down upon the stock, when instead, it should be sighted with the head erect. With a gun of two and one half inch drop, or even less, if you remember what I have said, you will overcome all difficulties. Then you will soon find that, with body straight and head erect, you will have become both expert and graceful in handling the weapon we love so dearly. I do not intend my readers to think that if they have selected a gun with a very low drop it will prevent them from becoming good shots. They will undoubtedly be able to do good execution; but it will be performed in an awkward way, and I doubt if they ever become expert in the art. I have never known a person to perfect himself in the art of shooting unless he held his gun as I have suggested.

Some years ago I was asked to shoot quail with a sportsman noted for his remarkable ability in the field. On examining his gun I found a three

and a quarter inch drop. This delighted me, for I felt sure I should not appear at a disadvantage. The first bird rose, and the expert, with bended head and twisted body, and right arm pressed tightly against his side, strove to take the life of a "Bob White" darting quickly away. At the end of the day the score was about even, thanks to my early tuition, and the advice of an old friend: "Remember the elbow."

Of course you desire to shoot well the entire day, and as fatigue is detrimental to accuracy, much depends upon the weight of the gun. I used to think a seven and a quarter pound twelve bore the correct thing, and for years never varied, until I discovered a six pound sixteen killed just as well, adn was less fatiguing to the body. One hardly imagines that a gun weighing one and one quarter pounds less can make any material difference in a day's tramp. I never thought it could, so I kept on with my beloved old twelve. Then through long association you may become attached with indescribable fondness to a certain gun. All the others may go, but to part with this worn and battered weapon which shows scars of days of long ago, each one of which brings pleasant recollections, would be like giving up a dear friend. So it was many years before I became a convert to the light weight, and now that an old

shot has shown me what good results he has obtained with a five pound twenty, I am quite sure that at the beginning of the season, I shall possess one; although I doubt very much if I ever become accustomed to so light a weapon.

There are twelve bore guns weighing not much over five pounds. I have never used them, aud know nothing about their merit. My favorite gun for field work is a sixteen bore. It should weigh about six pounds, with barrels from twenty-seven and one half to twenty-eight inches in length; the right a cylinder and the left a modified choke. Some persons prefer longer barrels, believing them to be steadier. The stock should be built with a very small pistol grip, and the drop not more than two and one half inches. The proper length of stock of course depends on the length of one's arms. A gun of these dimensions, if not loaded too heavily, is suitable for all field work.

I have always used guns (the premier quality) made by Messrs. W. C. Scott & Son, London, England. They are well built, and seem most safe with the nitro powders.

I remember when a boy with what pleasure I loved to roam the fields and woods with a nine pound ten bore, which someone sagely recommended as the best weight. But weight was nothing to me during those ardent days, and if I was

The Favorite Guns

fortunate enough to return at night with a brace or two of snipe or quail and some lone grouse which had accidentally flown across my range, my joy knew no bounds. The same ten bore is still in my possession, and is dearly prized, for it reminds me of the happy days of my boyhood passed on New England shores.

SHOOTING THE BIRDS

WHEN a woodcock rises, do not make the mistake of throwing the gun quickly to the shoulder and shooting simply in the direction of the flight. Raise the gun slowly, and try to get the bird in line of vision with the eye and muzzle of the gun the instant it touches the shoulder; then pull the trigger. It is owing to hasty shooting in the direction of the flight that so few sportsmen become good shots. The best way to become adept is to devote a few moments each day to raising the gun to the shoulder, at the same time aiming at objects about the room. You will soon find that the objects aimed at will be in line of vision with the eye the instant the gun touches the shoulder, and when this is accomplished you should practise on moving objects. Then you may go forth to kill.

Quick shooting is necessary at times, especially in thick covers; but even then do not shoot unless you feel you are aiming at the bird. A woodcock

Where Quick Shooting Is Necessary

as he rises in very thick cover usually hesitates a second before deciding upon what course to take. Whether it is upward, straight-away, or quartering to the right or left, he will poise. Then is the time to shoot, although he is at that instant often invisible. It sounds rather difficult, yet the feat is easily accomplished, and but little practice is necessary. Even where the cover is quite open, the birds will often poise an instant, thus affording most easy shots. In open country one should let them get farther away, otherwise the pellets will tear the flesh. But do not shoot when the birds are at long range; that is, fifty or sixty yards. The pellets scatter so that at such a distance one is more apt to wound than kill, and the birds will fly away and be lost. Instead of shooting, it is wiser to follow in the direction of their flight and try to flush them again. If you are not successful then, you will surely on the morrow find them back in the covers, when you may have another try. This is better than to make the birds linger in some hidden corner and die of their wounds.

If you fail to kill, do not excuse yourself by telling your friend that the bird dodged behind a tree, or twisted or dropped, just as you shot; for you will get no sympathy. Simply confess that it was poor work; then the disinterested countenance may change to one of slight compassion.

Sometimes the cover is so thick that one has a better chance to shoot kneeling. Then when the dog points the sportsman should kneel, and waddle along like a duck until the cock flushes. This requires quick shooting. If you take the line of flight, and do not wait too long, you are quite sure to catch him at the instant of hesitation. Do not shoot until you think you can kill. To say nothing of your own pleasure, continual missing is not at all interesting to the dog, and eventually spoils him for good work.

When the dog points, do not try to see the cock on the ground. The sudden changing of the eyes from the ground to the line of flight as the bird rises is confusing, and is apt to make one shoot too soon. More woodcock are missed in this way than when the eyes are elevated. I have frequently lost birds by being too inquisitive; and even clever shots will often miss having watched too long the antics of some cock which suddenly sprang from beneath the alders. Although we may lose a few birds by observation, we are often well repaid, for sometimes they furnish most interesting scenes. Of the many curious incidents I remember, one that I saw in the Burbank cover was quite amusing. My setter Mollie was pointing in a very thick place, and it being my turn to shoot, I asked a friend who was with me to go in and flush the bird.

His Pleasure

As the cock failed to rise, my friend called, so I also entered the cover. There, about eight feet in front of the dog, I found a woodcock strutting around, defiance in every movement of his body, while my setter, resting on her haunches, viewed the situation with amazement. The dark brown tail feathers of this indignant bird, tipped with snowy white, were raised and spread like a delicate fan; the tips of his whistling wings trailed the ground; every soft feather—a light armor for such a frail body—was puffed, and ready for combat. His proud head and ponderous bill were held aloft with pride, while the eyes, usually tender and sad, shone with a threatening glow. Instead of flushing at our presence, he seemed anxious for a fight. He would walk toward my dog as though trying to induce a combat. Failing in this, he hopped upon a log, and, with feathers still expanded, would strut most excitedly from one end of the log to the other. This exercise seemed to make him less defiant, for, jumping down on the other side, he started off, much to the discomfort of Mollie, who now began uneasily to follow the enemy. It was all very interesting, but I believe the cock had been playing a trick all this time, for no sooner had he reached a more favorable place of exit than his hostile attitude vanished, and before we realized what had happened our woodcock had

disappeared through the frosty air. Far away no doubt he was chuckling with delight at the trick he had played on us, the simpletons.

Many sportsmen are in the habit of moving the gun with the bird, swinging the gun ahead at the instant of firing, judging what space to allow according to the distance of the bird. I do not consider this good form or conducive to good result, for it is liable to make one too dependent upon finding his bird after the gun is thrown to the shoulder, and this is not artistic work. Watch the bird carefully in its flight; then make use of the practice you have had at home, and by the time your gun touches the shoulder it will be in line with the desired object, and the correct position for killing. If you find you are moving with the bird, shoot; but under no condition swing ahead, for if you do the chances are when you shoot you will arrest the progress of the gun, and the charge of shot will pass behind the bird.

In the "Country Life Library of Sport" the Editor says "that he has had the good luck to see more than a little of Mr. Fryer's shooting, especially noticed in respect of his quickness, and can affirm this, that though he preaches and practises the doctrine of swinging the gun with the bird, this swing is made so much a part of the act of lifting the gun, and bringing it to the shoulder as to be

quite imperceptible. There is no aim at the bird, and then a swing in front of it: all is done in one motion, and though the rapidity with which Mr. Fryer gets his gun off is one of the most remarkable features of his shooting, it is all done without the least appearance of hurry.'' Perhaps the question, as Mr. Hutchinson says, ''is as well summed up in the words of an old keeper, who has seen a deal of first-class shooting: 'It 's not so much a matter of aiming two yards, or ten yards, or five foot ahead of a bird, as it is of getting on terms with your bird.' Getting on terms with the bird is a full realization of his pace, his direction, and his distance, even while you are in the act of bringing up the gun, and it needs not to say that with this getting on terms with the bird, and also with the swing advocated by Mr. Fryer, there is not a moment's pause when the gun is brought home to the shoulder; the trigger is pulled on the instant.''

One is often tempted to swing ahead, especially when the birds are crossing to the right or left, and I must confess I have been guilty of this fault, to my sorrow. But if you will only remember how seldom, in so doing, you have killed (and then more by accident than good judgment), I am quite sure the following rule will not be amiss. If you have to swing, swing with the bird, but do not arrest the

progress of the gun. I should advise the use of chilled shot No. 8; about three quarters of an ounce for a sixteen bore. There are not as many pellets as in a charge of No. 9, but they smash branches well, and in thick covers this is often necessary. Besides, one frequently has a chance at grouse, when No. 8 is better. Nos. 5, 6 and 7 are too large and only adapted for extremely long range, when one pellet might kill; but, as I have already said, woodcock shooting is not a long range sport. It is artistic work, and appropriate weapons only should be used. For summer shooting No. 10 shot is the best size; but I hope my readers will refrain from pursuing the bird until sparkling frost whitens the ground.

I have often been asked whether I shoot with both eyes open. While I incline to believe that one of my eyes is fast closed, I would be unwilling to confirm the assertion; for at the instant of firing I am bewildered with a mysterious delight and doubt if I am capable of diverting my thoughts sufficiently to tell what my eyes are doing.

> 'T is I that mingle in one sweet measure
> The past, the present, and future of pleasure.

The instant of firing always reminds me of the

A Moment of Delight

supreme moment in salmon fishing, when the salmon has seized the fly and you have sent the hook home.

But look! O'er the fall see the angler stand,
Swinging his rod with skilful hand.
The fly at the end of his gossamer line
Swims through the sun like a Summer moth,
Till, dropt with a careful precision fine,
It touches the pool beyond the froth.
A-sudden, the silvery hawk of the stream
Darts from his covert and seizes the gleam.
Swift spins the reel, with easy slip
The line pays out, and the rod, like a whip,
Lithe and arrowy, tapering, slim,
Is bent to a bow o'er the streamlet's brim,
Till the salmon leaps up in the sun, and flings
The spray from the flash of his finny wings;
Then falls on his side, and, drunken with fright,
Is towed to the shore like a staggering barge;
Till beached at last on the pebbly marge,
Where he dies with the hues of the morning light.

Even this delight fails to thrill as does the pleasure of having tumbled over a fast-disappearing bird with a fine, clean shot. I should advise all beginners to practise shooting from either shoulder. Then if an accident befall, they will not be debarred from the delights of the field.

Be sure and remove the shells from your gun before getting into the trap on your way to the dif-

ferent covers, or when driving home. Be most careful when climbing fences. At the midday meal, and in any place where you do not intend to shoot, take out the shells. Many severe accidents have happened by neglecting these precautions. If you are shooting with a friend, always walk abreast, and try to keep him in sight; then accidents cannot happen. If more than one person accompanies you, keep together, and alternate shots. This is the only safe way. I once was so unfortunate as to shoot a friend of mine, and he still carries in his body a few pellets to remind me of the eventful day. Although the accident happened in very thick cover, it was owing entirely to my friend's disobedience of rules. Friends of mine have often sent their pellets flying about my head, and quite too close for safety. Once, indeed, I was hit on the right side of the face with eight pellets, and one only a quarter of an inch from my eye. It was in open country, but my friend thought I was so far off that the shot could do no harm. The safest way is to keep together; then there can be no chance of danger. And when in our declining years, too enfeebled to pursue the sport so dear to us, we are seated at the hearth reminiscencing on the past, there will be no regrets to mar those joyous days spent afield together.

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown,
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down,
Creep home and take your place there
The spent and maimed among.
God grant you find one face there
You loved when all was young.

TOGS AND COVERS

WHAT is the proper suit to wear? That depends upon the kind of cover one is to shoot. Along the shore of Narragansett Bay and in the dense thickets about Kingston Hill a suit of mail would not be amiss, for the large, green bull-briars are so thick that they twine themselves about you like the long, stinging feelers of the cuttlefish, and when you are once in their embrace they will fondle you well. Those dense jungles mean mischief to him who has the courage to enter them and do battle, and unless you are properly clad you will come forth like the beggar, all tattered and torn.

I find that the most suitable dress for this country is a pair of light tweed trousers or breeches, over which canvas overalls of medium weight should be worn. A canvas shooting jacket is quite necessary. It prevents the briars from penetrating your arms, which is most annoying. A pair of high-laced waterproof shoes are prefera-

A Narragansett Cover

ble to boots. Do not fail to cover your head with some smooth fabric unless you desire the playful twigs to make sport of your baldness. When thus arrayed, you may enter the dreaded land and call yourself a brave sportsman, for none but the brave are willing to hunt the cock in such a terrible country. I have often come out of those covers with blood dripping from my face, knees bared, my legs dotted with small piercing briars and looking like a Virginia ham dressed with cloves for a royal feast. Still, with all these discomforts, I find great enjoyment, for usually I have outwitted the tricky bird which tried so hard to elude me. I remember chasing a woodcock half a day in a cover of this kind before I shot it; and I have often wandered for hours in and out of the dense thickets, happy in having brought to bag two or three of the longed-for birds. Of course you have to be very keen for this kind of sport to hunt such ground, especially since the cock are now so scarce; but a brace of these hard-earned birds shot in this difficult country gives me more pleasure than a good-sized bag of quail or grouse found on more favorable land.

The Sherman cover, situated on the West side of Kingston Hill, used to be splendid ground. One October morning, with a friend, I shot sixteen cock in this cover. The following day we found

six more and two days later still five of the stately birds were brought to bag in this delightful spot. Since then I believe that the cover has been partially cut down. The Burbank Swamp, situated about a mile to the Eastward, could tell wondrous tales of the many birds which used to dwell on its hillside. The country around McSparran Hill, with its charming scenery, overlooking the blue waters of the bay, used to boast of fine covers and many cock. But summer shooting and other enemies have almost silenced the darkened alders sloping toward the sea, and now the whistling sound so often heard in the twilight about the hills has nearly ceased.

Years ago I used to shoot this country, and until the last few seasons I have usually given it a trial. A friend always accompanied me, and often an extra gun would join us in the sport. Our best score for any one year was one hundred and five woodcock. The following season we shot sixty-eight, and another year thirty-five. Of course these bags do not seem to be remarkable; but when you consider the difficult country we were in, the scarcity of birds, and that every day other hunters were wandering through the very same covers, I think we did remarkably well.

Often when going to different covers, a bevy of quail which a few moments before was ner-

vously feeding in the stubble, would rise and flash across the field to scatter in the dense thicket amid the woods; much to my friend's delight for he preferred following Bob White to his lair rather than to scour the dreaded brush for a solitary bird. Occasionally a ruffed grouse suddenly sprang from some hidden recess and with its delightful whirr would dart like an arrow through the tree-tops to safety beyond. Sometimes the gentle bunny, smacking his lips in fancied safety over a delicate, juicy leaf, would show his heels as he raised his cotton-tail, endeavoring to escape into some favorite retreat. But the new gun speaks joyfully, and the harmless rabbit lies squirming and kicking in the last throes of death.

Although I have been guilty of taking the life of a rabbit, I do not consider it much sport. The last one I shot I wounded so badly that I then declared I would never kill another. When I went to pick him up he was still alive and struggling on the ground. A big hole had been made in his side; two legs were broken, and the large eyes seemed to say: "What have you done?" Although it seems cruel to kill these harmless animals, I must confess that my palate often craves their delicious saddle. Serve in a chafing-dish with a dressing of the softest brown to which should be added pure Oriental spices, a bit of lemon, a dash

of old Madeira, and you will have a morsel worthy of any Epicurean banquet. A few flowers, culled by loving hands, may decorate the table; and perchance a rare vintage of Romanée Conti, mellow in rich red color, may give forth its ambrosial perfume. Should a fair and not unloving maiden deign to taste, then so much more pleasing will be the saddle of bunny.

The shooting in Canada is easier and much less fatiguing, for in the Province your pathway is never barred by demons with prickly tongues. Your path is easy, and made cheerful by the rich, red fruit of the fields. There the pleasant breath of autumn greets you tenderly, and any medium weight woolens are appropriate wear; nor must you forget the smooth material for your cap. You will find the twigs just as annoying as they are in the States, and they will delight quite as much to play pranks with your headdress.

Few people know what splendid cock-shooting can be had in Canada. I have shot in the Dominion for many years, and have always had good sport. Even as far as the interior of Nova Scotia there are birds. Now my shooting is so arranged that some of my covers will not be disturbed for two years. Alternating in this way preserves the game and gives grand sport. One day while I was wandering on the outskirts of the Garden of Eden

Ready for the Sport

(I have told of this cover in the "Midday Meal"), my setter Dick suddenly stopped and poking out his nose became rigid. Being in the open and the ground quite bare, I did not think he could possibly be pointing a woodcock. I tried to urge him forward, but all my efforts were in vain, so I concluded that some scent more important than that of a rabbit or a belated meadow-lark must have entered his delicate nostrils. After waiting a moment, I took a few steps in front of the dog, and seven woodcock arose. To see so many birds rise at once was quite unexpected and somewhat confusing. Although a bit rattled, I managed to make a double; but my friend, like myself, not expecting any woodcock, was less fortunate. I have never heard of so many cock rising on one point. Two, and sometimes three, may flush; but to have seven spring up is a most remarkable occurrence. Further on we flushed eight more birds among some birches. And so we continued wandering about the Garden the rest of the day, putting up the lords and ladies until ninety-five of the court had shown their dark brown feathers trimmed with royal ermine. By night forty of this gay party were resting peacefully in the game-bag slung so proudly across the lad's shoulder who accompanied us with the shells and kettle.

Another day in a cover not far distant from the

Garden, our two guns bagged twenty-six birds. We did not try to see how many cock we could kill, but at that time twenty birds a day on my ground was a fair average, which for my son, friend and self I do not consider excessive. The following score of woodcock was made in the covers during October, 1904, by a friend, my son and myself.

October	1, 15	woodcock	
"	4, 22	"	
"	5, 20	"	
"	6, 12	"	
"	7, 28	"	
"	10, 15	"	(Two hours' shooting)
"	11, 20	"	
"	12, 40	"	
"	13, 3	"	(One hour's shooting)
"	14, 19	"	
"	15, 10	"	(Half a day)
"	17, 14	"	
"	18, 26	"	
"	19, 9	"	(Two hours' shooting)
"	20, 19	"	

We shot in fifteen days two hundred and seventy-two birds, but as we were out only five hours on October 10th, 13th and 19th, and but half a day October 15th, it was really a thirteen days' shoot —an average of about twenty cock a day.

Owing to dry weather, the first of the shooting

The Fifty-Nine-and-a-Half-Inch Head

for 1906 was very poor; later we had a surfeit of rain, which lost us a number of days' sport.

Score for 1906:

October	1, 1	woodcock	(Two hours' shooting)
"	6, 4	"	
"	8, 12	"	
"	9, 9	"	(One and a half hours' shooting)
"	12, 28	"	
"	15, 19	"	
"	16, 17	"	
"	17, 16	"	
"	20, 9	"	(Two hours' shooting)
"	22, 11	"	(Three hours' shooting)
"	24, 25	"	
"	26, 14	"	
"	30, 9	"	(Two and a half hours' shooting)
"	31, 3	"	(Two hours' shooting)

The autumn of 1906 moose were very numerous. We often saw fresh tracks on our way to the covers; only a short distance from the cabin my son shot a very large bull. The antlers spread fifty-nine and one half inches and were very symmetrical.

There were a good many woodcock in the covers in 1907, but the weather was most unfavorable for our sport. It was so stormy that we frequently shot in wet brush and often we were obliged to return to the cabin, although the covers were full of birds. For several days we did not even go out.

Score for 1907:

September	20,	9 woodcock	(One and a half hours' shooting)
"	28,	4 "	(Two hours' shooting)
"	30,	7 "	(One and a half hours' shooting)
October	1,	10 "	(One and a half hours' shooting)
"	7,	9 "	(Two hours' shooting)
"	8,	9 "	(Two hours' shooting)
"	9,	15 "	(Two hours' shooting)
"	10,	12 "	(Three hours' shooting)
"	16,	11 "	(Two hours' shooting)
"	17,	18 "	
"	18,	16 "	
"	19,	8 "	(Three hours' shooting)
"	21,	12 "	(Two and a half hours' shooting)
"	22,	29 "	
"	23,	20 "	
"	24,	12 "	
"	25,	7 "	(Two and a half hours' shooting)
"	27,	15 "	
"	28,	4 "	(Two hours' shooting)

Moose were more numerous than in 1906. I shot a large bull near the camp. The next morning my friend also bagged a fair head.

Many persons consider it cruel to kill game birds. Yet is there any other cruelty in shooting than that of maiming? Is not the instant killing a more merciful end than that of starvation or through the misery of old age? Man has discovered that game birds are nourishing food, and that setters and pointers exist for the purpose of

scenting them. If Nature has produced an animal especially for hunting game birds, it seems as though some Power has ordained that woodcock are to be killed; and as shooting, in my opinion, is the least cruel and the quickest way of ending a life, I try to find enjoyment in it, instead of cultivating a romantic view. Shooting is a manly exercise; it preserves our health; and when we refrain from needless destruction, I believe the mind becomes better and purer from our association with the game birds. Laws are enacted for their preservation, and if obeyed, there will be no danger of extermination.

The game laws of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are well enforced. The birds are not disturbed in summer, and with all looking after their interests, I believe it will be many years before the whistling of their wings will cease throughout the Province.

THE MIDDAY MEAL

FAR away in the wilds of New Brunswick lies a Garden of Eden. No breath of the Damascus rose perfumes this enchanted place, nor do Persian women, escorted by royal minstrels, journey along the banks of the stream which waters this fertile valley; but as the west winds sigh their delight among the spruce and cedar which partially encompass the vale, a cool and refreshing odor is wafted down the hills, giving health and strength to the many little beings hidden among the few alders and birches scattered about the plain. No plumes of the Cashmerian egret decorate the heads of the gallant knights, but feathers of light and dark brown color resembling soft velvet adorn their bodies. Nor do silken lanterns skilfully painted by Canton art, light the woodmaidens to their cooling bowers; for their night is made beautiful by the northern stars, and is illumined by the fireflies that sparkle in the

The Garden of Eden

darkness. We have named this cover the Garden of Eden owing to its beautiful situation and the great number of birds it harbors. It is here, after shooting the surrounding country, I love to come for the midday meal, and reclining in the warmth of the sun, listen to the kettle as it sings its merry tunes suspended above the freshly-kindled fire.

One of the greatest pleasures of the day is the fire and boiling the kettle for tea. The fragrant beverage seems to inspire one with a desire to protect the life of birds and animals. Many a happy hour, while sipping the warming draught, I have spent beside the brook in this pleasant spot, discoursing upon the beauties and wonders of Nature.

The bubbling brook doth leap when I come by,
Because my feet find measure with its call;
The birds know when the friend they love is nigh,
For I am known to them both great and small.
The flower that on the lonely hillside grows
Expects me there when Spring its bloom has given;
And many a tree and bush my wanderings knows,
And e'en the clouds and silent stars of heaven.

I shall never forget the astonishment of the lad who used to carry my game-bag and kettle, when I tried to interest a friend in the knowledge of mythology and the customs of the ancient Egyp-

tians—subjects on which he was a bit shy. I was telling him how they used to worship the rising sun as a god, and called it Horus, the child-god; how they named the noontide sun Amen Ra, and the setting sun Osiris. The god of darkness they called Typhon, and represented him as a crocodile; and they believed that the ending of the day was caused by Typhon slaying Osiris, the setting sun. My friend, more interested no doubt in the number of birds he hoped to slay, began to show signs of weariness with the tale; but the lad, on the contrary, was a most eager listener. So, continuing with the story, I told him the legend which, depicted on the temple walls some five thousand years before Christ, represents Horus, the rising sun, fighting and slaying Typhon to revenge the death of his father Osiris. When the recital was finished, much to the relief of my friend, the lad with an astonished expression looked into my face and said: "Is that true, sir?" I replied that my knowledge of the veracity of the Egyptians five thousand years before Christ was limited; but if he wished to learn about the truth of my assertion I would be only too glad to send him a book upon the legends of antiquity. "Oh my, but who is he, sir?" was the reply!

Perhaps a discourse on mythology may be a bit profound at the noon siesta of a day spent in wood-

The Midday Meal

cock shooting; but while sitting around the fire, if one cares to investigate his surroundings, much information may be gained in natural history. There are the different trees to be named and studied. The flowering shrubs and ferns should also be made to disclose their hidden charm. Perhaps there will be a meadow rose standing near which has changed its pink summer flower into a bright scarlet fruit of autumn. A green dragon may show its head decorated with its orange-red berries, and many other varieties of brilliant-colored fruits can be seen growing in this wooded garden, as spacious and beautiful as the Oriental Shalima. Even the brook running through the field may furnish interesting thoughts; and so much life does it contain, and so wondrous are the inhabitants that if you will stop a few moments to gaze into its depths you will marvel at its revelations. Instead of hurrying the midday meal, prolong the hour by cultivating the thoughts I have suggested, and I am sure you will become so interested in the work that many an extra moment will be devoted to this pleasure, and each day you will find that the desire for making large bags will gradually diminish until you are content to roam the fields for their beauty alone.

The magnifying glass is most useful in the observation of Nature. Many are the strange things

it brings to our notice. In studying minute insect life it is indispensable. I always carry one with me when wandering about the fields. It is a joy to look through the small lens and see the marvelous coloring Nature has given to the wild flowers, and with what skill she has formed the petals of the softest tints, and the slender pistils rising from the tiny corollas. Most delicate of creations are the wild flowers.

> Then wherefore, wherefore, were they made,
> All dyed with rainbow light;
> All fashioned with supremest grace,
> Upspringing day and night—
> Springing in valleys green and low,
> And on the mountains high,
> And in the silent wilderness
> Where no man passes by?

THE HOMEWARD DRIVE

WHAT a pleasure, after the day's fatigue, to see in the distance the impatiently waiting trap! The dogs are tenderly lifted into the vehicle, where they find the springy hay a delight to their tired bodies. Then comes the restful drive homeward in the twilight. When we are comfortably seated, wrapped in our warm coverings, how soothing to be whirled over a good country road, inhaling the sweet-smelling cedar as it perfumes the crisp, frosty night.

A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
Breaks the serene heaven.
In full-orbed glory, yonder moon divine
Rolls through the dark-blue depths.
Beneath her steady ray
The desert-circle spreads
Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.
How beautiful is night!

While we are being skilfully guided through the dense woods, dimly lighted by the pale moon and brilliant stars, our driver suddenly shoots out the stinging lash, and breaking into the opening we speed across the plain.

During the drive in the midst of the tree shadows one usually becomes silent, and our thoughts are likely to turn toward some great sorrow or happiness we have experienced in life. I have noticed that just as soon as the dark, shadowy phantoms begin to appear, instead of discoursing on the splendid merits of the dog or on some difficult shot finely executed, one's conversation gradually drifts to themes of a sadder and more romantic nature. Not only in New Brunswick, but away down in Florida and out in Northern Kansas—in fact, wherever I have shot—no matter how rough the characters who were with me may have appeared, moonlight seemed to have the same effect upon all, for it either aroused some forgotten sorrow or intensified the charm of a happy romance. The fair "maiden whom mortals call the moon" must have some hypnotic spell which she delights to cast upon us, her subjects, as we turn in homage toward her. How many a moonlight night in the Northwest have I driven across the plains and along the banks of the silent flowing Republican, listening to the romantic conversation of my

The Impatient Trap

Scotch driver, Sandy, and to the pathetic songs which he always used to sing when under the influence of the fair goddess! One bright, clear night, when we were alone on the prairie, I asked him why at the ending of his songs he remained silent so long. His answer was the following stanzas:

Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery;
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers;
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk;
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

O, pale, pale now those rosy lips
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly;
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly;
And mouldering now in silent dust
The heart that lo'ed me dearly.
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary!

I felt deeply touched at the emotion of this strange character, and did my best to divert his thoughts. I suggested that when he was out on the plains he must try not to be melancholy; and instead of allowing the fair face in the moon to make him dwell upon his sad story, he should rather look upon the enchantress as a means of overcoming his sorrow. If he would study the legends of the constellations as well as of the pale satellite, he would hear other tales than those about fair women. He would learn that each brilliant spot, a mere flickering light in the sky, was a joyous world sending forth brightness to guide him on his lonely drives; and he would also discover that the horses he drives, the hares darting across the trail, and even the bears roaming the distant mountains, are all by ancient story identified with the constellations which he sees shining above.

Sandy seemed pleased at our conversation, and asked me if I knew any of the legends, and would I tell him one. I related a Hindoo story as I remembered seeing it in one of Mr. Jermain G. Porter's books; how Buddha, in an early stage of his existence, was a hare traveling in company with an ape and a fox. The god Indra, disguised as a beggar, asked them for food, and the three went out to seek it. The hare alone returned from his

quest unsuccessful, and not wishing to seem lacking in hospitality, ordered a fire to be built and cast himself into it to roast for his guest's supper. In reward for this heroic devotion to duty, the god placed him in the moon. When I had finished the legend he appeared less pensive, and lighting his pipe asked me to tell him about the stars. So I called his attention to the fierce Aquila with his chief Altair, ever ready to pounce upon some fair youth whom Jupiter might desire for his cupbearer; and as we drove along I pointed out the North Star in the tail of the Little Bear, sending forth its light from an immeasurable distance—a safe beacon to guide us home. Then I told how Moore, in his Lalla Rookh, poetically compared Nourmahal, the flower of the Harem, to this brilliant body:

> Thou loveliest, dearest of them all;
> The one whose smile shone out alone
> Amidst a world; the only one
> Whose light among so many lights
> Was like that star on starry nights.

These few lines must have appealed to his romantic nature more strongly than the legend of Buddha, for after a short silence he asked me to tell him more about the sad face in the moon. Wishing to please him, I quoted from the same

book of legends about the beautiful Syrian moon-goddess whom the Greeks have called Selené, and how the Romans saw in her Diana; and the Peruvian Incas' story of a beautiful maiden who long ago fell in love with the moon and cast herself into his arms; while some of the Pacific Islanders made the moon a rough wooer who snatched a fair bride from the earth. I also told him how Ben Jonson in the following lines addresses the fair goddess:

> Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
> Now the sun is laid to sleep,
> Seated in thy silver chair,
> State in wonted manner keep.

and how Dan Homer speaks of her as the silver-footed queen; while Tennyson tells us that

> All night through archways of bridged pearl
> And portals of pure silver walks the moon.

By the time we had finished discoursing upon the mysteries of the heavens, bright lights shone in the village, and presently pulling up at the dear old tavern, man and dog alighted to refresh their bodies for a happy outing on the morrow, while our romantic driver of the plains departed to taste no doubt the cup of forgetfulness.

> Take hence the bowl; though beaming
> Brightly as bowl e'er shone,

Oh, it but sets me dreaming
Of happy days now gone.
There in its clear reflections,
As in a wizard's glass,
Lost hopes and dead affections
Like shades before me pass.

Each cup I drain brings hither
Some scene of bliss gone by:
Bright hopes—too bright to wither;
Warm hearts—too warm to die.
Till, as the dream comes o'er me
Of those long-vanished years,
Alas! the wine before me
Seems turning all to tears.

THE ENGLISH BIRD

ALTHOUGH English sportsmen prize their woodcock as highly as we do our American bird, I do not think they are so keen for the sport. Probably the scarcity of birds is one reason; and then their pursuit might lead to the disarrangement of well organized pheasant and grouse drives, which are so essential to the sportsmen. I have never shot woodcock in Europe, so I will not attempt to describe their habits. I am familiar with the bird only as I have seen it resting peacefully in some attractive stall in Bond Street, London; and there, while sauntering through that interesting thoroughfare, I have often gazed upon him sadly. Although a much larger bird than the native of America, its plumage is less brilliant. While the feathers of the back are similar in their markings, one misses the dark, rich tones. The breast, instead of possessing those graduating tints of reddish brown peculiar to our bird, is dusty, and

looks more like the breast-feathers of an English partridge. Nor do I consider them as delicate in flavor as ours. The English woodcock will sometimes weigh a pound; one that was served me at Claridge's restaurant certainly looked as though it would weigh quite that amount. The birds are not so plentiful as formerly; only a few are shot as they occasionally drop into some cover. In Scotland, after the grouse drives are over, I believe one can still have fair sport. Many birds during the eighties, were shot in Ireland. As late as 1899 on some estates it was possible for five or six guns to bag three and four hundred cock in a week's shooting, and I am told that even now on the western coast there are good flights.

Not only in the British Isles were the birds numerous, but they scattered over nearly all of Europe in their annual Southern migration from Northern Russia and Scandinavia. Northern Africa, which seemed to be the limit of their journey, used to give splendid shooting. In these days I hear large bags are frequently made in the covers near Rome; and in Greece especially one can still have fine sport with the wandering bird. How they must love this Southern land to ignore the dangers of such an extended flight! Many of the frail forms, with visions of sunny homes, have fought their way along storm-swept coasts

only to perish far out at sea; and most of the birds which were fortunate enough to escape the gales were trapped in nets while resting for a few days on some good feeding-ground. In this way hundreds of woodcock were caught annually and sold to hotels and restaurants along the route of their migration; so in Europe as well as in America woodcock have had their enemies.

Netting used to be carried on extensively in the British Isles, but I do not believe it is practised at present.

The English poets also had a fondness for woodcock. They have occasionally mentioned the birds with affection; and bards of late years have frequently sung their praises. Shakspere refers to the bird as being rather a simpleton:

> Oh, this woodcock, what an ass it is!

Ben Jonson's lines,

> Mistress, this is only spite;
> For you would not yesternight
> Kiss him in the cockshut[1] light.

allude to the time of night the woodcock love.

Sir Walter Scott was a devotee of cock shooting,

[1] About twilight; the time when nets are set to trap woodcock.

A Five Days' Shoot

but in his days in Scotland birds were destroyed wholesale for market.

I should love to follow more closely the woodcock of the North in its visits to the British Isles, and in its wanderings about the Continent; but English sportsmen and eminent ornithologists have long ago told pleasant and entertaining tales of the bird beyond the sea.

SERVING THE BIRD

THERE are various ways of cooking woodcock, but when one departs from the simplicity of the roast the flavor of the bird is less pleasing. Beware also of the thin slices of bacon which so many chefs delight to use as shrouds for the unfortunate birds they serve upon toast spread with that unappetizing mixture, trail and liver. Woodcock, after being shot, should hang five or six days in a cool place. This softens the muscles of the thighs, and makes the flesh more tender. If they are to be kept any longer, it is better to draw them, for the trail is apt to spoil the flesh. I never could find any pleasure in eating the trail, and in restaurants especially where any concoction may be served. To have the birds in best condition, they should be plucked and drawn just before the cooking; but do not rinse or lay them upon ice, for this hurts their flavor. Be careful not to sever the heads, for you must know that the brains are delicate, and sweeter than those of the nightingales served at

royal feasts—a fact which escaped Lucullus in his sumptuous banquets. When you have sprinkled a bit of salt and pepper upon the birds, place them in an oven until they are cooked through; not "bien cuit," but until the flesh has lost all its purple color and changed to a more tempting red. They should now be turned before hot coals until the skin is crisp brown. If they are carefully attended, you will have a morsel acceptable even to the palate of the renowned Gouffé. Should one be fortunate enough to possess an old-fashioned meat-jack, then the birds will be done to perfection; for it turns regularly before the fire, and roasts them in the proper way. They must be served hot; but I have frequently been served when their bodies had scarcely felt any heat, and their flesh, saturated with fat juices from the bovine family, was a cold, bluish purple. Yet they were pronounced delicious by friends and seemed to be enjoyed.

They should be eaten quite by themselves; for they are rich, and, like old wines, to be appreciated should be indulged in sparingly.

My favorite dinner, when woodcock are served, consists of a few oysters, followed by a light, clear soup; then delicate small shells holding fresh crab meat, and sweet cream, heated to a savory tint, will not detract from our feast of the scolopacidae.

As soon as the crustaceans are consumed, let the woodcock be announced; and woe unto him who allows the lordly comer to grow cool. No trail-crowned pedestal of toast, saturated with unsavory juices, supports this king of the covers. Only a few cresses decorate the salver upon which he reposes, and we quaff a draught of Bordeaux to his memory. Should one desire to extend this simple repast, a few mushrooms, stewed in cream, are not amiss; but the mushrooms must be fresh, and should simmer from early dawn in salted water until half an hour before serving. Add then the sweet cream and pepper. Place over a hot fire for a few minutes and stir briskly. Then, with a dash of Madeira or sherry, even a Brillat-Savarin would not disapprove.

If one is willing to decorate the tender bécasse with the artistic skill of French chefs, butter a chafing-dish and in it place the fillets and legs of two woodcock. Cook until done. Then have ready the following dressing to pour over them, and serve hot:

To a small quantity of thin brown gravy add a glass of Madeira or sherry, some salt, pepper, a pinch of cayenne, the juice of half an orange, and a bit of currant jelly. Mix well and heat.

I have found the above recipe especially pleasing at a late supper after the play.

The Turkey Cover

When woodcock are dressed for broiling, a good deal of the juice is lost, so I do not recommend this way of serving the bird. A friend of mine, a thorough gourmet, who prides himself on his culinary skill, and who makes yearly pilgrimages to Maryland during the season of ortolans, terrapin and canvasback, prefers the dainty woodcock with its body spread out, and resembling the Austrian eagle on the caparisons of royal steeds.

The salmi, sauté and chaud-froid may be appreciated, and various elaborate sauces have been concocted by French chefs to make more tempting the rich juicy flesh of the woodcock; but the simple roast, in my opinion, is the only way to serve the noble bird.

MY AUTUMN SHOOTING OF 1905

Autumn, I love thy bower,
With faded garlands drest;
How sweet alone to linger there,
When tempests ride the midnight air,
To snatch from mirth a fleeting hour,
The Sabbath of the breast.

October 4th.—Our party, consisting of Mrs. Davis and myself, with two blue Belton setters and a Samoyede called Nansen II, arrived safely at twelve o'clock to-day in St. John. We drove to the Hotel Royal and were given a comfortable apartment, where Mrs. Davis intends to stay while I am shooting in the hills.

Nansen II is a white Russian sledge dog, and I am told is the grandson of the Samoyede which accompanied Nansen in his Arctic explorations. I have named him "Le Loup Blanc."

October 5th.—This morning my friend and I, with four dogs, boarded the express for Ennis-

The Blue Beltons

CHRIS AND TED

killen, a primitive little station on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and not far distant from St. John. We found our trap ready to take us to a small white building standing in a corner of the field which lies an interesting spot among some distant hills. A wild brook flows at the foot of the field, and upon the rich, dark loam that lines its banks, woodcock are frequently served their evening banquet.

> How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
> Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow.

On the opposite side of this moist vale, white and Norwegian pines, and pale green tamaracks, mingling with spruce and cedar, breathe their perfume upon the house so peacefully situated.

At twilight, during the bright October moon, sweet whistling notes are heard; beautiful forms rise from nearby covers and dart quickly through the air, casting shadows across the pale building resting in the shade of the alders. Deer often leap the broken rails at the commencement of the woods, and steal the turnip-tops that wither in the sun. Sometimes a fearless moose, seeking his companion, strays across the lot. The prickly porcupine, in his nocturnal excursions, also has a fondness for the place; and other animals, when the moon is bright, love to wander about my home

on the hillside. Here, during the October days, roaming through field and cover, I hear the twilight music which charms. Again I come to you, dear Cabin, and with joy I greet you! Both pleasure and sorrow have I experienced since last we met; but with your ever-cheerful welcome, and your silence broken by the sound of crackling logs, all sad memories shall drift gently away, as the pale smoke floating toward the distant horizon. No sweet jessamine trails over your weather-stained walls, nor do fragrant flowers which sip the early dew lend their radiant colors; but I praise your unveiled beauty as the happy Zingians praised the Soheil, for you have the power of casting spells sweeter than those of the great Mantra or the gold jewels of Jinnie. So to you, dear Cabin, I return.

It is pleasant to be back again amid scenes of happiness, and to gaze upon the forest, and far-away mountains, looming up a dull gray against the horizon; where soft winds breathe a soothing influence.

To-day has been clear, but a bit too warm for comfortable shooting. Through some mistake my shells were left at the station. My friend very kindly offered me his twenty-eight bore. We shot the covers near the cabin, and found only a few cock. The weather has been very dry, so I sup-

Le Loup Blanc

pose most of the birds are remaining in the woods where there is some moisture. Unless there are heavy rains to drive them to the covers, I am afraid we shall not have good shooting this fall.

The alders and birches still hold their trembling leaves, making it difficult to see the birds when they rise. We flushed eleven cock. Grouse were very scarce; we saw only three, and these we shot.

I am told the heavy snows of last winter killed nearly all the birds. Their only means of safety, at night when fierce snow-storms sweep the Province, is to dive from trees into the treacherous refuge. They will burrow into the snow until they are well covered, and in this position rest comfortably until morning. Then, gradually working their way out, with a whirr they hie to their happy feeding-grounds. Sometimes, when the snowfall is very severe, they are unable to extricate themselves so quickly. A light rain comes; a cruel crust forms, and many little bodies imprisoned beneath have a sad ending. It seems strange that these softly-falling snowflakes which spread their white mantle over the land, giving beauty and life to the forest, can destroy so many of these strong, powerful birds.

Score, 4 cock; 3 grouse.

October 6th.—The shells arrived last night. To-

day I shot my twenty bore. We tried the best covers, and found them completely dry. Our dogs worked splendidly, but the alders and birches were so dense with foliage that it was rather difficult to execute well. Flushed twelve cock.

Score, 6 cock; 1 grouse.

October 7th.—Tried different grounds, hoping to find wet land. Shot some very thick covers and started a number of birds; but it was utterly impossible to do good work; only an occasional glimpse of the cock, and they were away. We had luncheon at the old barn by the brook. Hunted Ladysmith in the afternoon; flushed eighteen birds. It was very trying to hear the whistling wings, and not be able to see the cock. Even the dogs were annoyed when the birds flushed and the guns were silent. Dan, our expert, begins to show displeasure; for he is less obedient, and hunts farther away. We need frost and rain badly for our sport. I have decided to go to-night to my covers at Petitcodiac and return here later.

Yesterday afternoon a moose quite surprised us in one of the covers. We left for St. John at 10 P.M. It was glorious driving down Enniskillen Hill, with the moon shining upon the dark forest, and every star clear and bright in the frosty sky. For a few moments our party were silent as we

Dan

gazed at the infinite space above. Even the dogs seemed awed by the grandeur of the night.

Score, 6 cock.

October 8th.—Sunday. St. John.

October 9th.—Petitcodiac. The days continue clear and cool. No rain has greeted us. Left St. John at eleven o'clock this morning and arrived at Petitcodiac about half-past two. Mrs. Davis and maid are with me; Loup is also of the party, quartered at the comfortable hotel, and I sadly fear he is an unwelcome visitor to the fowls wandering through the village. Went shooting late; found the covers quite as thick with foliage as at Enniskillen. Hunted Dan and the puppy. Both dogs were a bit off, owing, no doubt to a day's frolic with Loup. Flushed ten birds, which was very satisfactory for the time we were out.

Score, 6 cock.

October 10th.—Weather delightful; cool and clear. Went out at eight o'clock; returned at six; shot some new covers which I have leased; flushed twenty-five birds, mostly in thick places; lunched by our favorite brook, and rested a long time around the fire, telling stories of the past to our driver and shell-bearer. Loup, in his walks with

Mrs. Davis, has discovered where the dainty fowl reside. I am afraid there will be trouble soon.

Score, 18 cock; 1 grouse.

October 11th.—Clear; shot different covers including the Garden of Eden, which was withering like the rest; only four of the inhabitants remained. A few scentless flowers endeavored to welcome our return as they gently nodded in the breeze. Even the brook, usually so joyous, had lost its life during the parching drouth. The whole Garden was a disappointment, so we wandered quietly away.

Score, 9 cock.

October 12th.—We walked four miles to some new ground this morning, but did not find any birds. It was owing, probably, to the dry weather. In the afternoon hunted some good covers, but the cock were very scarce. We flushed only seven. While ascending a hill, four deer crossed the road about thirty yards in front of the trap. They stopped for a moment to look at us, then disappeared quickly into the forest.

Score, 3 cock.

October 13th.—Weather cloudy; wind east. Hunted Dan and the young dog together. They both worked well. The young dog gave me three

Dan Pointing

points in rather difficult covers. I was surprised to see how proudly and well he retrieved. Flushed thirteen birds.

Score, 3 cock; 1 grouse.

October 14th.—Weather cloudy; indications of rain. Hunted covers which I have leased; found thirty-five birds. They were very wild, getting up some distance ahead of the dogs. The natives while hunting grouse must have disturbed them considerably. The foliage was so thick a number of birds got away without even giving us a shot.

Score, 16 cock.

October 15th.—Sunday. It is delightful to be here to-day amid the cherished hills. A faint odor of the forest perfumes the air, and the sky, a vast expanse of pale blue, is calm in all its grandeur. No clouds float by to cast their shadows, but bright sunlight shines upon our village. Even the dogs are glad at the coming of the Sabbath, and rest contentedly beside me. All is quiet, save the ringing of the bell on the little white church which stands beside a road stretching toward the forest. As I listen to the joyous welcome, the following verses seem to appropriately describe my surroundings:

With silent awe I hail the sacred morn,
That slowly wakes while all the fields are still!
A soothing calm on every breeze is borne;
A graver murmur gurgles from the rill;
And echo answers softer from the hill;
And sweeter sings the linnet from the thorn;
The skylark warbles in a tone less shrill.

Hail, light serene! Hail, sacred Sabbath morn!
The rooks float silent by in airy drove;
The sun a placid yellow lustre throws;
The gales that lately sighed along the grove
Have hushed their downy wings in dead repose;
The hovering rack of clouds forgets to move:
So smiled the day when the first morn arose!

October 16th.—Cold and clear. The leaves are beginning to fall. As we were passing one of the covers, a deer walked into the opening. My friend, only too eager to slay the timid animal, hastily jumped from the trap and tried to get a shot; but I was delighted to see its graceful form scale the fence at the farther end of the field. I dislike to have these animals shot, for when wounded they often utter a pathetic bleat, and to the sympathetic it is not pleasant.

Score, 9 cock.

October 17th.—Weather still clear and cool. We were off bright and early this morning for new covers. Left our trap at the old sawmill and

A Cherished Hill

walked two miles inland. We found only three birds. The covers were delightfully situated and easy to shoot. They must be splendid grounds in a wet season. We saw two porcupines on our way and a dead fox in a spring trap. From appearances, the fox must have been hanging three or four days. As we were returning, my foot caught in a trap, and still later my dog's right hind leg was seized by another of these deadly inventions. Fortunately I was close at hand, and he was soon released. In the afternoon we hunted ground which we had previously shot. Flushed fifteen birds.

While driving homeward, we saw many forest fires. Some were quite near and others, far away behind the hills, were reflected in the heavens. These fires endanger many of the covers.

Score, 10 cock.

October 18th.—It has been clear and blustery. This morning my friend went to arrange about some leases. I hunted the young dog alone. He found and pointed three birds. Two of these I shot. Ted again distinguished himself, for he retrieved perfectly. Returned early to the hotel and had luncheon with Mrs. Davis. In the afternoon we took the old dog Chris, and drove to a splendid cover which I have leased. Mrs. Davis waited outside in the trap while I wandered among

the birches. I flushed five cock and shot four. Chris trailed these birds a long distance. Our drive was delightful, and through a beautiful country. Hills and dales were dotted with homes of thrifty Canadians, making an interesting picture. Occasionally we passed a deserted farm, and its condition told a tale of sadness. We noticed that the alders and birches were fast losing their summer costume, and fallen oak leaves had nearly crimsoned the ground. Tamaracks still showed their pale green color in the lowering sun—a delightful contrast to the dark firs and spruce. All Nature seemed to be preparing and gowning itself for the cold of winter.

Loup discovered other dainty fowl to-day, strutting proudly through the village, and quickly seized a victim. More sport for the Missus! My friend returned with six birds, having flushed nine.

To-night the surrounding country is illuminated by the forest fires, and I fear that the cherished Cheese Factory on the outskirts of the village is doomed. All the natives have turned out to lend their aid in extinguishing the blaze. It is hoped the Canadian Relish will be preserved.

Score, 12 cock.

October 19th.—The needed rain came last night,

St. John in the Distance

but not in sufficient amount to do any good. It has been cloudy and warm all the morning. Went shooting at three o'clock; found the ground still quite dry. Flushed four birds. Leased a number of new covers, which increases the shooting around Petitcodiac. On our return we found Loup dragging a cow's tail through the village. Whether he severed this useful member from any of the native animals remains a mystery; but so far no claimant has appeared. Am leaving for St. John in the morning. I hope to return to the cabin Monday.

Score, 3 cock.

October 20th.—Arrived in St. John at half-past six. Raining slightly.

October 21st.—St. John. Weather cloudy. My setter, Chris, has taken a severe cold—I presume while on the train yesterday. A veterinary surgeon came this morning and prescribed rest and whisky.

October 22nd.—St. John. Sunday. Clear and cold. Mrs. Davis attended Trinity Church. I went to see Chris and found him greatly improved. The poor old dog licked my hand and begged so hard to go out. I hope he will not cultivate a desire for the flowing bowl, for yesterday and to-

day I gave him large doses of the prescribed whisky, and he enjoyed it immensely. If he still improves, we shall go to Enniskillen to-morrow. While we were out for a stroll this afternoon, Loup attempted to annihilate a pet cat; but fortunately it sought refuge in a tree, and my dog escaped the vengeance of an elderly spinster who was shouting frantically in a doorway.

October 23rd.—Chris seemed much better this morning, so we again started for Enniskillen, where we arrived without mishap. Made some photographs before shooting. After luncheon hunted the McGillian and Ladysmith covers. Flushed six birds. They were very wild, and seemed quite willing to show us new tricks; frequently they ran thirty or forty yards ahead of the dogs before flushing. I believe it is owing to the dry weather and the emaciated condition of the birds; for when fat, unless disturbed, they very seldom do this. Chris, however, seemed equal to the occasion; he trailed them slowly, and gave me points on all.

While driving homeward we saw the sun go down behind the Enniskillen hills, and wondrous indeed were the colors cast upon the somber clouds floating lazily in the sky. Tints of the softest pink mingled with the most delicate lavender;

Trailing the Birds

dark shaded crimson, streaked clouds of silvery whiteness; huge phantoms mounted on steeds of gray fought across rivers of gold; the whole horizon seemed ablaze with unknown splendor, and even to the zenith the heavens shone with a light of glory. We were dazed by such magnificence, and for a few moments gazed in rapture upon the scene. Soon a dark form crept stealthily over the land and slowly stretching out its arms enveloped the earth in darkness, while the sublime picture before us vanished into space.

Score, 5 cock.

October 24th.—Cold and clear. We made an early start this morning in order to shoot the Neripise covers. I have leased all of this ground. Flushed sixteen birds; they were very wild. While lazily ascending the forest hill, a hen grouse was discovered strutting proudly along the road. Visions of a dainty dish suddenly awoke the lethargy which had settled upon our tired party. My friend, always ready for the chase, was chosen to procure for us the wily bird. Stealthily he alighted from the trap, and with panther-like tread commenced to stalk the tempting game. But Mistress Grouse evidently scented danger, for with a toss of her head she quickly darted across the road and disappeared in the forest. My friend, as eager

as huntsmen for the fleeing fox, rushed after the bird. In hot pursuit I heard him tearing through the brush, and breathlessly awaited the report of the twenty-eight; but the whirring of wings was the only music that greeted our anxious ears. Presently my crestfallen friend, flushed with excitement, emerged from the woods. As he came toward the trap, Robert Burns' song, "The Heather was Blooming," echoed throughout the hills; so we knew that others had sometimes found it difficult to steal on a bonnie moor-hen.

The heather was blooming, the meadows were mawn;
Our lads gaed a-hunting ae day at the dawn,
O'er moors and o'er mosses and mony a glen;
At length they discover'd a bonnie moor-hen.

Sweet brushing the dew from the brown heather bells,
Her color betray'd her on yon mossy fells;
Her plumage outlustered the pride o' the spring,
And O! as she wantoned gay on the wing,

They hunted the valley, they hunted the hill,
The best of our lads wi' the best o' their skill;
But still as the fairest she sat in their sight,
Then, whirr! she was over, a mile at a flight.

I red you beware at the hunting, young man;
I red you beware at the hunting, young men;
Tak some on the wing, and some as they spring,
But cannily steal on a bonnie moor-hen.

Score, 10 cock.

THE FOREST ROAD

October 25th.—Fine and very cool. Hunted Chris alone. Shot seventeen birds before luncheon in the cabin cover; the faithful dog gave me eighteen points. In the afternoon hunted Dan and the puppy on other ground. Shot five birds. During the day we flushed twenty-five cock. We had grand sport, and have decided that twenty cock in one day are sufficient. Hereafter twenty will be our limit. The covers are now clearer, so the shooting is less difficult. A light rain last night.

Score, 22 cock.

October 26th.—Clear and cold; wind west. Hunted some new covers situated on two adjacent hills and in a most fascinating country. A ravine thirty feet deep separates the hills, and to retrieve from its depth as the eager Dan did was a meritorious feat. On this ground we flushed twelve birds. Lunched beside the frozen brook. In the afternoon hunted Dan and Chris. While Chris was pointing under a fence, two birds flushed. I missed the cock I shot at, but the other flew into the line of pellets, and to my surprise dropped dead.

Mr. Shaw writes that Colonel Sands killed two woodcock with one shot in England, November 4, 1835, and probably there are not half a dozen such cases known. He also relates that Sir Francis Chantrey, the sculptor, accomplished a similar

feat in 1830, and a number of interesting verses have been written about the event. I think those by Spencer Stanhope are most appropriate:

> Two woodcock fell at his one shot,
> The joyous Chantrey smiled to see;
> Then, pitying their untimely lot,
> He gave them immortality.

I believe the place where the birds were killed is now known as Chantrey Hills.

It was disappointing not to have killed my two birds with one shot; for I might have become famous by accomplishing that which so few sportsmen have done.

During these happy days, Loup is amusing himself about the cabin. He tries hard to lead the young dog astray, and gazes longingly at the fowl, but as yet has not done battle. All the dogs sleep in front of the big fireplace. Chris has assumed command of the party, and it is amusing to see him when he feels his superiority. He will not eat unless from my hand; but he is a grand cock-dog, perfectly broken, and loves me, so I humor him.

Score, 9 cock.

October 27th.—Another cold, clear day. Went out early. Hunted new covers. Birds were very scarce. Found only three in the cabin cover. The young dog was a bit unsteady, and flushed the cock

Homeward Bound

before he scented them. A little punishment was given. I dislike to do this, for after being scolded he always comes and licks my hand in sadness. Had luncheon at the cabin. In the afternoon we drove to Ladysmith. It was quite deserted, and I was doomed to disappointment, for I had wagered that five or six of the garrison would surely appear and oppose our advance.

We frequently wager small amounts on the day's shoot. It is amusing, and there is a certain fascination about winning a wager in the field. I have often in my rambles heard of curious bets, but the one a friend told me Lord Lovatt successfully made some years ago is by far the most interesting. He wagered he could kill a salmon with a horsehair, and a trout with a cobweb. A hair from a horse's tail was selected and used as a leader in killing the salmon, and a twisted cobweb for the trout. I presume that neither the salmon or trout were very large.

On my way home, we stopped at a small cover and flushed one cock. As we did not find many birds, I believe they are fast leaving for the South, so I shall soon take my departure. Although the cock have not been so numerous as last year, the month has been delightful, and I am content.

Score, 1 cock.

October 28th.—Arrived in St. John last night. The town was greatly excited over the visit of Prince Henry of Battenberg. Mrs. Davis and I walked to the docks about seven o'clock and saw one of His Majesty's squadron lying at anchor. It was really a most imposing picture, for the bright moon shone beautifully above, while small electric lights peeped out from the dark hull of the ship and streaked the swift waters with brilliancy.

October 29th.—St. John. Sunday. Again clear and cold. In the afternoon with a friend I watched the procession going to Trinity to unveil a tablet placed in the Church in memory of the New Brunswick men killed in Africa during the Boer War. The young Highlanders were very picturesque in their kilts and white jackets.

October 30th.—Our glorious weather continues. About eleven o'clock this morning we drove to a cover at Calvert's Lake, six miles from St. John. Here we flushed four birds; but they were certainly wild. Only one of them, however, ignored our skill. We ate luncheon in a charming place beside a rapid brook; made some photographs, and returned to the hotel at five o'clock.

Score, 1 cock.

Calvert Lake Cover

October 31st.—This afternoon accompanied by Loup we drove on the Black River Road. We had a delightful view of the Bay of Fundy, which sends its treacherous tides far inland. Loup caused great excitement chasing the sheep and cattle feeding on the hillside. We passed the Sportsman's Home, situated on a knoll, and overlooking the bright waters of the bay. Here dwell enfeebled old men; some of them, no doubt, gazing toward the distant covers with recollections of a joyous past.

To-night there are indications of a storm, but if to-morrow be fair, I shall visit the cabin for the last time this autumn.

November 1st.—A light veil of snow has fallen during the night, changing the cheerful covers of yesterday and the brown autumnal fields into a scene of almost arctic solemnity. The alders, only a short time ago joyous in the bright sunlight, now under the threatening clouds bend their whitened heads in grief. The birches on the hillside, where the birds a few hours since in the twilight, were sending forth their sweet music, are bowed with sorrow; and through the spruce and cedar comes the cold breath of the North, a warning of approaching winter.

Those fading leaves,
That with their rich variety of hues
Make yonder forest in the slanting sun
So beautiful, in you awake the thought
Of Winter.

So to-day, dear Cabin, we part. May the blinding sleet and snow, as it sweeps across the plain, work you no harm these long, weary months; and when the next October moon is high in the heavens, I hope I shall again see the fair lady's light shining upon you in your peacefulness.

Among the beautiful pictures
That hang on memory's wall,
Is one of a dim old forest
That seemeth best of all.

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